From the Delvin to the Dargle

Walking the coastline of County Dublin

Hugh McBryan

This booklet is dedicated with love to my wife, Marie

"At the beach, life is different. Time doesn't move hour to hour but mood to moment. We live by the currents, plan by the tides, and follow the sun."
- Sandy Gingras, Writer

"Every time we walk along a beach some ancient urge disturbs us so that we find ourselves shedding shoes and garments or scavenging among seaweed and whitened timbers like the homesick refugees of a long war."
- Loren Eiseley, Writer

"When anxious, uneasy and bad thoughts come, I go to the sea, and the sea drowns them out with its great wide sounds, cleanses me with its noise, and imposes a rhythm upon everything in me that is bewildered and confused."
- Rainer Maria Rilke, Poet

"I pray to be like the ocean, with soft currents, maybe waves at times. More and more, I want the consistency rather than the highs and the lows."
– Drew Barrymore, Actress

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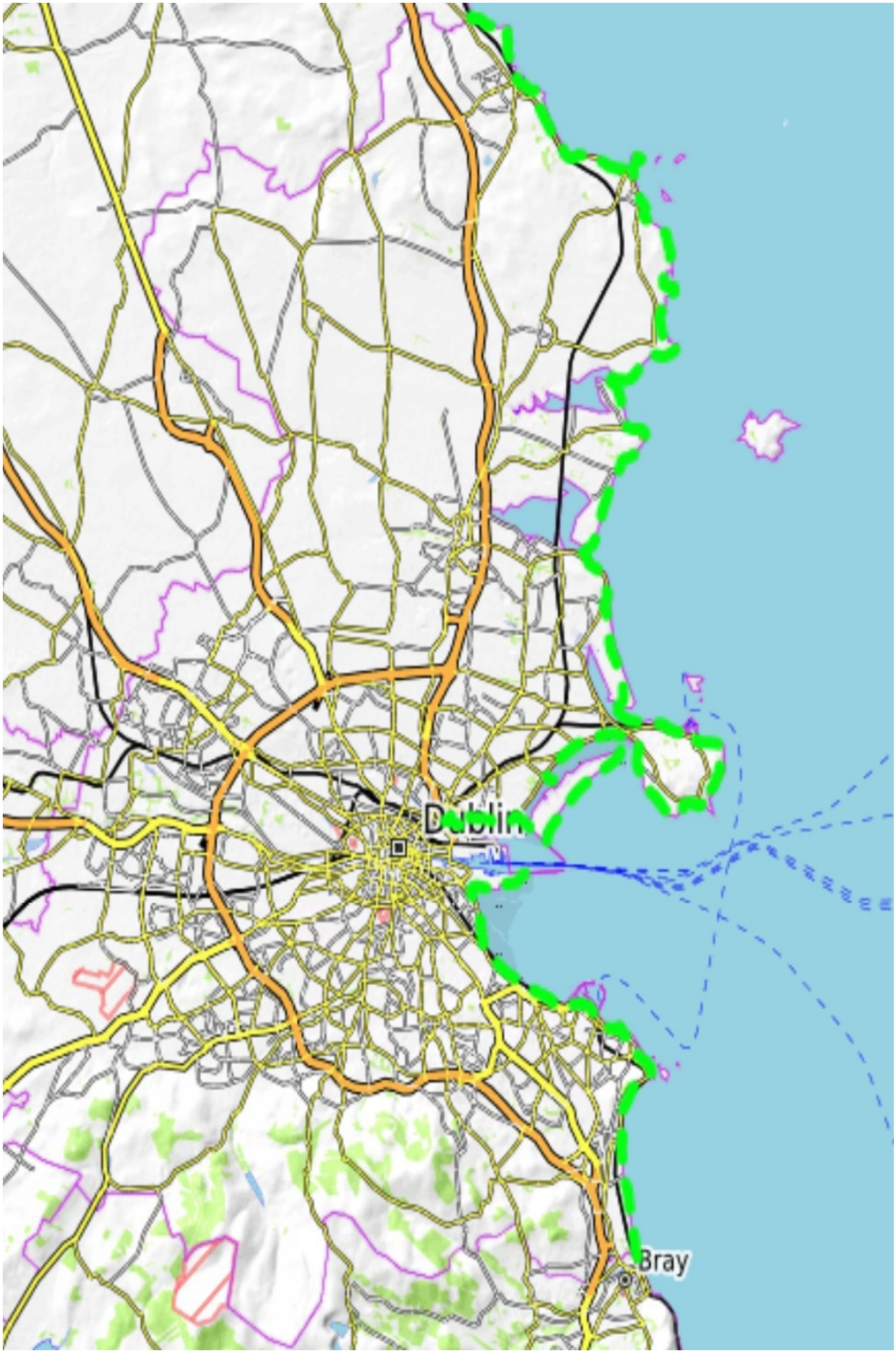
Contents

Chapter	Title	Page
	Preface	1
1	Delvin Bridge to Balbriggan	5
2	Balbriggan to Skerries	9
3	Skerries to Loughshinny	13
4	Loughshinny to Rogerstown	19
5	Portrane and Donabate	25
6	Malahide to Portmarnock	31
7	Sutton to Howth	37
8	Howth Cliff Path	41
9	Bull Island	47
9a	Tolka Estuary	53
10	South Bull to Salthill and Monkstown	57
11	Salthill and Monkstown to Killiney	65
12	Killiney to Bray	77

Front cover: *Knocknagin Bay Beach, just south of the river Delvin estuary*
Back cover: *Killiney Bay, viewed from Sorrento Park, Dalkey*



Map showing the full route from the Delvin River to the Dargle

From the Delvin to the Dargle
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Preface

County Dublin is the third smallest county in Ireland with an area of just 922km². It is also, by far, the most densely populated county in the country. The county is divided into the local government administrative areas of Fingal, Dublin City, South Dublin and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown.

The total coastline of Co.Dublin extends to almost 170km. However, that would include the coastlines of each of its islands. In these chapters, Bull Island and Red Island are the only (former) islands whose coastline is at least partially included. So the coastline considered here is about 155km long. When minor indentations and promontories are bypassed, the total distance covered in these walks reduces to about 100km. Almost all of this coastline is highly accessible, making this an ideal walking amenity. The objective is to stay close to the sea where possible but not necessarily along the water-line. Very occasionally, it is necessary to follow the most coastal road which might take you briefly out of sight of the sea, but such events are the exception. The descriptions presented here follow the coast from north to south so that you will be facing into the light. Most of the views shown have been taken looking north to benefit from the lighting. Be sure to turn around frequently as you walk and appreciate the view in the opposite direction. Indeed, many walkers would often comment that it is worth repeating any walk in the reverse direction for a totally different perspective.

This is simply an account of how the coast can be walked in manageable sections. It is not a guide to the history nor to the geography of the terrain. Occasionally, some historic or geographic feature of particular note may be referenced. Please be aware that places you will visit along this route are steeped in history and many are geographically significant. Your enjoyment of any walk like this will be greatly enhanced if you take even a little time to prepare before any section of the walk by reading up on some of the local lore for that area.

Cautions:

As with any walking activity, you should always make preparations and ensure that you are equipped for the conditions that you are likely to encounter. That means wearing or carrying suitable clothing, especially footwear, and being prepared for the weather to change. As this is a coastal walk, be prepared for slippy surfaces, particularly when rocks are wet or covered with seaweed or algae. Most of these routes are not waymarked so directions given here must be followed judiciously.

Coastal erosion results in continuous changes to parts of the coastline and you may encounter recently fallen sections which are muddy and slimy; occasionally, sections of cliff-walk may become dangerous or impassable for the same reason. Avoid off-road sections when the weather is stormy or foggy. It is strongly recommended that you time your walks for when the tide is out – access to some sections of these walks may be limited or even dangerous at full tide. Accidents can happen, so always carry a phone so that you can call for support, if needed.

The entire coastline (or foreshore) belongs to the State and can be freely visited by anyone. However, the coastal route described here includes paths, tracks and access routes which may not be public. All of the route as described was freely accessible but respect for landowners rights should always be observed.

In following the descriptions offered here, the responsibility for safety and legal rights rests with the walker. No liability can be assumed by the author for the integrity, safety, hazards or changes which may be encountered along any of the routes described, nor for the access rights of the public to any private lands.

A word on Piers and Estuaries:
All along this coastline you will encounter many harbours and piers which are invariably interwoven with much of the local history of the areas. The walk text draws your attention to a total of some 13 significant piers or harbours all along this coastline, plus a few minor private ones. Exploring any of these piers will inevitably involve retracing your steps back along the pier to the coastline itself. Sometimes, this might be just a short deviation; others (such as the South Bull Wall of Dublin Harbour) might be a significant walk in itself. For this reason, walking the length of the various piers has not been included in these notes. That is not to suggest that they are not worth exploring – they certainly are. Please note, however, that doing so will significantly extend the cumulative coastal distance to be covered.

Conversely, there are a few significant tidal estuaries along this coastline which are not bridged at the point where they enter the sea. Consequently, walking the coastline involves either following the outline of the estuary inland until you reach a suitable bridge, or else just skipping ahead to the next stretch of coastline. Attempting to follow the estuary outline is frequently complicated by marsh and sloblands, and would add many kilometres to the overall walk. For this reason, the second option has been adopted in these notes. Please be aware, however, that these estuaries are valuable and fascinating ecological resources with particular interest for anyone keen on birdwatching. They are also incredibly peaceful locations which should certainly not be ignored! (At the time of writing, work has already commenced on adding a footpath/cyclepath to the rail crossing of the

Broadmeadow estuary. This will be a very welcome facility, giving wonderful access to relatively isolated parts of the estuary. However, while this crossing is considerably closer to the coast than the nearest roadbridge, it would still involve several kilometres of walking inland and away from the coastline itself).

Other notables:
As mentioned above, only occasional reference is made to places or items of historical or geographical interest. In addition to the piers and estuaries, the presence of some 19 Martello Towers (plus the sites of a further two that are no longer standing) are flagged along the way. These towers were built by the British as defences against possible Napoleonic attack. While they were manned by military to a varying extent and over a varying period, none were ever called into service for their intended purpose. Indeed the only attacks that they have ever endured were from the climatic forces of the sea, from vandalism and perhaps from public outcry about their varying uses and states of decay over the centuries. However, they are remarkably robust contructions that have stood the test of time and are well worth noting.

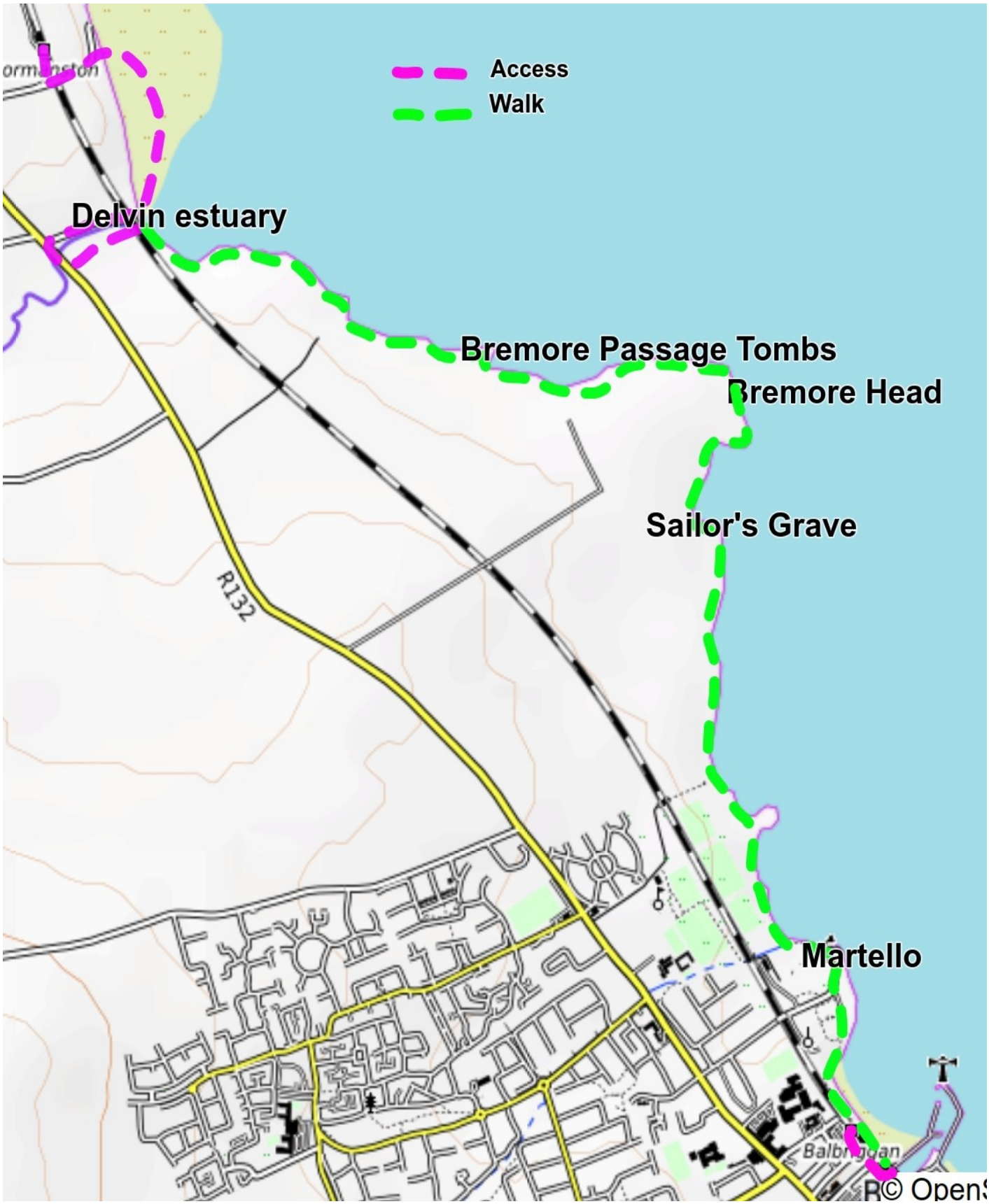
Walking along this coastline, one cannot fail to be impressed by the number of golf courses in close proximity to the coast, some 10 of which have merited mention in the texts. You will also pass 7 significant islands off this coastline, only one of which, Lambay, is inhabited.

Deviations, divisions and alternatives:
For the most part, the walks described are quite straightforward from start to finish although different access routes to those start and finsh points might be suggested depending on your mode of transport.

For some of the longer walks, possible break points to split that walk into a couple of divisions have also been suggested. Text relating to such alternative divisions is usually (shown in brackets).

A few of the walks include sections which are identified as significantly more difficult. In these cases, an alternative route, usually along paved surfaces, is (given also in brackets).

Finally and most notably in Chapter 11, a few sections of the coastline, while accessible at a given location, can not be joined together as a continuous walking route. Some of these sections of the coastline can be at least partially explored but, in doing so, you will have to retrace your steps before proceeding further along the coast. Text related to such deviations is [clearly indicated].



Map 1 The Delvin to Balbriggan

Chapter 1

Delvin Bridge to Balbriggan (~5km + 1.5km)

Along most of the northern part of County Dublin, the river Delvin forms the border between Counties Meath and Dublin. The estuary of the river Delvin forms the northern-most limit of the coastline of Co.Dublin so, arriving from north of the county on the coastal road R132, a sign welcomes you to Fingal as you cross the roadbridge over the River Delvin. You need to start out to the coast from here.

"Fáilte go Fingal" greets you as you cross into County Dublin

Access

Gormanston station is just 1km north of the river Delvin. Commuter trains stop at this station, as does the 101 Bus Éireann service (stop 132841). From the station you have the choice of walking back via the R132 road or crossing the railway on the roadbridge and following the beach southwards until you arrive at the Delvin estuary – here you will have to walk out to the R132 in order to cross the Delvin on the roadbridge. There is limited car parking on the north side of the Delvin estuary. Immediately south of the roadbridge, take the footpath on the left that heads towards the sea for a couple of hundred metres, before crossing a little rivulet and passing under the railway bridge carrying the main Dublin-Belfast railway. You emerge onto the beach at the most northerly part of the County Dublin coastline. This is where your walk begins.

Just before you start to head southwards, take a moment to look northwards at the wonderful expanse of Gormanston Beach. This open stretch of flat sands continues almost unbroken for some 10.5km, past Mosney, Laytown and Bettystown to the Boyne at Mornington, indicating that a guide to walking the coastline of County Meath should be a very simple undertaking! On the day we set out on the Dublin

coastline, a couple of micro-lite pilots had just landed on Gormanston Beach and had left their flying aparatus on the sand while they enjoyed a picnic break.

Flying machines on the beach

The Delvin estuary into the Irish Sea

The Walk

From Delvin Bridge to Balbriggan is 4.5km by road. However, the coastline here is a succession of rocky promontories and coves, so this walk is at least 5km. For the most part, rocky sections can be avoided by walking on little pathways just above the rocks and alternating with beach walking along the coves. Start on the beach and then use the dune path to reach the beautiful sweep of Knocknagin Bay Beach.

Knocknagin Bay Beach

Continue alternating until the eastmost promontory of Braymore Point. Just before the Point there are the remains of Bremore Passage Tombs. Shortly after the Point, you'll pass a sizeable cairn, “The Sailor's Grave” which commemorates the crew of the “Bell Hill” which foundered off this coast in 1875. A plaque in the grass describes the memorial.

Braymore Point

The Sailor's Grave

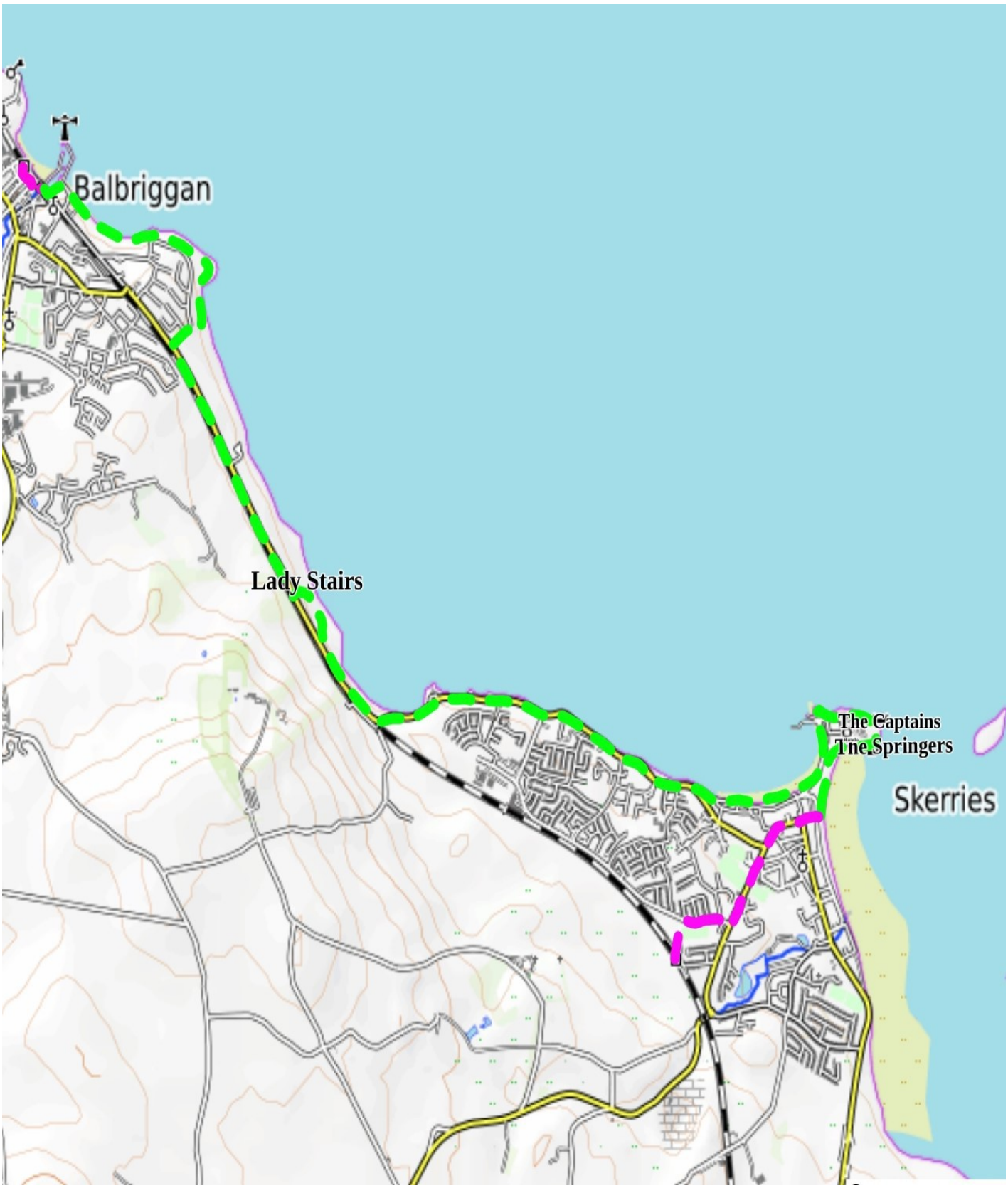
The path now continues to rise on low clay cliffs before plunging between trees down a steep (possibly wet) access onto Bremore Bay Beach with Balbriggan coming into sight.

Continue along the beach until a path rises past Balbriggan First Coastguard Boathouse to the Martello Tower, the first of many such towers which you will pass during the course of these walks. From here the surfaced path continues to rise above the broad sweep of Balbriggan Beach.

Balbriggan Martello Tower

Balbriggan Beach and Lighthouse

In order to access the town centre, drop down again onto the beach and pass under the railway just before the north pier of Balbriggan Harbour.



Map 2 Balbriggan to Skerries

Chapter 2

Balbriggan to Skerries (~9km + 1.5km)

Balbriggan is an old fishing village which formed at the natural harbour formed by the estuary of the Breacan river. A solid pier and lighthouse gave rise to a compact harbour. The village developed a reputation for textiles (from which the name 'balbriggans', for 'long johns', is derived) and that industry led to channeling of the river for milling. The demolished traces of that industry, combined with the massive rail bridge, give the town its somewhat unusual central landscape. The 'Sacking of Balbriggan' was one of the most infamous atrocities carried out by the Black and Tans during the War of Independence. Nowadays, the town is better known for manufacture of plastic pipes and for printing of passports.

The coastline along this walk is much closer to the coastal road and, along several stretches, it is recommended to follow the road, most of which has footpath.

Access

Balbriggan station is very central in the town which is also well serviced by Dublin Bus routes 33 and 33A, and by Bus Éireann 101 and 910 services. Exiting the railway station, walk down the footpath to your left, turning right before the path rises to cross the central span of the railway bridge. Turn left down George's Hill and pass under the railway bridge to the harbour. There is car parking available at the station, at the Town Car Park and at Quay St.

The Walk

Start off up Harbour Road on the south side of the harbour. Instead of continuing onto the pier, turn right onto Seapoint Lane. A track leads down from this lane onto the beach. You will be struck immediately by the contrast between the beautiful sandy beach which you experienced to the north of the harbour and this stony beach to the south. Indeed, this beach becomes progressively more of a boulder field, difficult in places to pick your way across, especially when the boulders are wet and slimy. Your first objective is the grassy slope rising at the southern end of this beach. (In order to avoid clambering over the boulders, you might prefer to continue on Seapoint Lane, then left onto Seapoint, bearing left again onto The Bower and finally left again onto Fancourt Heights).

Boulder strewn beach

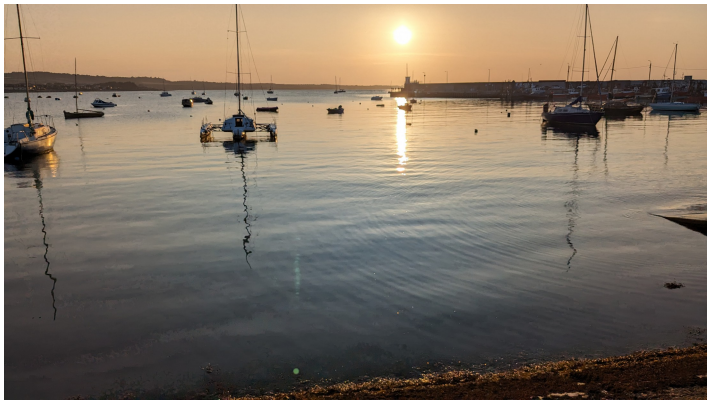
Grassy slope up to Fancourt Heights

Whichever route you take, you will arrive at a lovely grassy parkland fronting the houses on Fancourt Heights. Follow the coastal perimeter of this parkland until a few steep steps lead down to further parkland fronting the houses of Hampton Cove. Once again, follow the coastal perimeter of this park to the southern tip where a path leads steeply down to the rough beach. The next section of coastline can be difficult, so it is recommended to exit Hampton Cove onto the R127 Skerries Road and take the footpath on the inland side of the road for the next, rather boring and noisy 1.5km to where a footbridge extends across both the railway and road. From the base of this footbridge, the Ladies Stairs leads steeply down to Barnageeragh Beach. Be careful at the last few steps which may be inconsistent. (Before descending to the beach, you might like to take the footbridge across the railway to explore Ardgillan Castle and Demesne and perhaps enjoy some refreshments).

The Ladies Stairs

Barnageeragh Beach

Follow Barnageeragh Beach almost to the southern extremity and then rise up again to the R127. Just south of here, the R127 forks left, passing Curlew Cottage and leading to the approach road into Skerries. Along here, you have the choice between intermittent bits of path above the rocks or carefully following the road which has no footpath. Just after the White Cottages, bear left again onto North Strand which you follow as far as Harbour Road which, in turn, brings you to Skerries Harbour.



Skerries Harbour

Terns sculpture

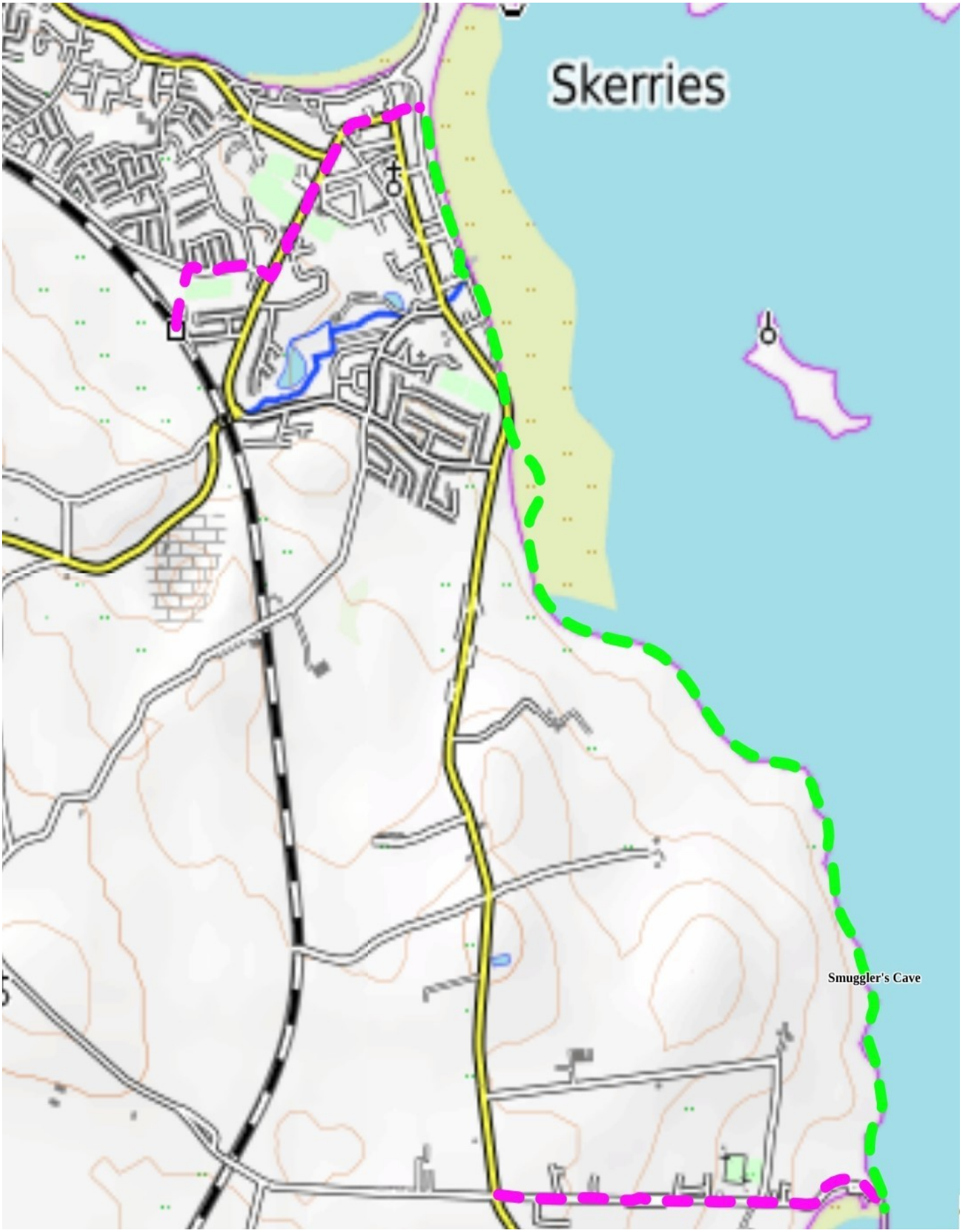
From the Harbour you can continue straight on to explore the footpaths around the full perimeter of the Red Island promontory with its climbing look-out pole and lifeboat station. Watch out for The Captains and The Springers swimming locations, the Terns sculpture and the Martello Tower. Throughout the 1950s – 70s, this whole area was the site of Red Island Holiday Camp, founded by the Quinn family (of Superquinn fame). Out to sea you can see the three Skerries islands, St.Patricks, Colt and Shenick with its own Martello Tower. For those travelling by car, there is ample parking here at Red Island.

The Springers bathing area

The 'Ovens'

Follow the footpaths on the eastern side of the promontory, past the sun-trap area traditionally known as “The Ovens”, until you come to where Bob's Family Entertainment Centre faces the sea-front. A footpath leads inland here to the Monument on Strand Street in the centre of town. Here you can find bus services and access to the Skerries Station via Thomas Hand St.

The lane leading to Skerries town centre



Map03 Skerries to Loughshinny

Chapter 3

Skerries to Loughshinny (~5km + 3km)

This walk starts off as a pleasant promenade stroll but, before the end of this section of coastline, you will encounter some not-so-easy walking terrain. It could not be described as a difficult walk but the extent of stony beach, boulders and irregular rocky surfaces will not appeal to everyone and will ensure that it takes longer than most 5km walks. The terrain is completely unsuitable for buggies. Moreover, it certainly needs to be tackled when the tide is out. On the positive side, there are some gloriously isolated spots along this section - plus, of course, the Smuggler's Cave!

Access

Train to Skerries (about 15 minute walk from the seafront). Or bus 33/33A to Main St. (You can also use the 33 to get from the train station to Main St. To do this, leave the station car park at the left end and follow the path which runs between two old ballast pits to Barnageeragh Road. Cross this road and use the bus-stop a few metres to the left).

From the Monument on Main St., take the narrow McLoughlin's Lane that leads through to Bob's Amusement Arcade. Cross the South Strand Street here to join the promenade.

A two car solution might usefully be considered as this walk ends at an unserviced location, about 1.5km from the nearest bus-stop.

Pause for a moment when you arrive on the promenade to take in the vista from Red Island with its Martello Tower to the left, the sweep of Skerries South Beach and dunes in the foreground against the backdrop of the 3 islands, Colt, St.Patrick's and Shenick with Lambay off to the right beyond Holmpatrick.

The Walk

Turn right and head south, either along the well-maintained promenade or along the beach. (There are public toilets along this promenade).

After about a half kilometre, the stream from Skerries Mills discharges onto the beach, but it's easily crossed by the promenade bridge. Skerries soon gives way to Holmpatrick and the beach begins to peter out. Here you can briefly follow the footpath of the coastal road as it sweeps around the gentle bay.

Colt, St.Patricks and Shenick Islands

Start of rock slabs

After a short distance, drop down some steps onto what is now a stony beach where some attempts are being made to protect the soft clay cliffs from erosion. If the tide is well out, you may be able to walk some of this section on sand. However, you will find that wet seaweed-strewn masses of rock will eventually coax you back up onto the drier stony beach. Another small stream discharges from the cliffs onto the beach just as the land turns out towards the headland. After a short distance the stones give way to flat limestone and sandstone bed-rock paving, very pleasant to walk on as you begin to head out towards the headland at the end of the bay. From here on, the isolation of this section of coastline makes it particularly attractive for those interested in sea-birds or wildlife. Conversely, the peace and solitude may be repeatedly interrupted by the sudden loud noise of crow-bangers in the fields above the coast.

As you begin to round that headland you realise, as is so often the case, that there is another headland just ahead. In fact, you are facing a progression of small headlands and mini coves with varying terrain underfoot. Looking out to sea, Rockabill, which had been hidden behind Shenick Island, is now clearly visible with its lighthouse. Another lively stream discharges from the fields. This is certainly a section of coastline where sturdy boots will be appreciated.

You come shortly to a barbed-wire fence running right out onto the rocks. This gives an indication of just how much erosion has taken place along this stretch in recent years. That fence was presumably separating fields in the not too distant past.

As you round this next headland you get an opportunity of a change to walking on grassy surfaces. It's worth turning around here and looking back at the lovely view of Skerries, while ahead of you, Lambay has once again come into full view. Several remnants of toppled wall pillars are all that is left of what was presumably once the boundary wall of all of the property on which you are now walking – further evidence of the erosion that continues along this coast.

Sea-birds over the rock slabs

Looking back to Skerries and Shenick

You come next to a stretch of coastline which is littered with large boulders right up to the base of considerably higher cliffs which are once again in danger of collapse. You should avoid walking too close to these loose cliffs. There is some evidence along here of caves in those cliffs but, presumably they have mostly been eroded by now. It is strongly recommended that you don't attempt this stretch when the tide is in (or due to come in) because you might find yourself trapped against those cliffs.

Along here, when you round a particularly rocky point, you will come across Loughshinny's famous Smuggler's Cave. While caves such as these were undoubtedly used for smuggling, it is understood that they probably originated as mining tunnels. There are accounts that some small-scale copper mining was carried out in this region in the 18th century. Indeed, the nearest road to this cave is called Mine Road.

Shortly after this you come to a small sandy cove where the first very clear evidence of geological heave and warping of the bedrock is evident. Loughshinny is a location that is famous for this type of geological feature. You will have opportunities to see several more examples, both as this walk progresses and again during the walk outlined in the next chapter.

As you round yet another little headland, the next Martello Tower comes into view. That is actually the Drumanagh Tower which is beyond Loughshinny, so your destination for this chapter is more or less in sight at this stage.

Geological rock formations

The Smuggler's Cave

However, there is still one final obstacle before you reach Loughshinny Bay Beach. That is, the very steeply sloping rocks on the final headland of this section. These rocks extend right down into the sea from the cliffs along the headland. You are very unlikely to get around these rocks at high tide and to attempt to do so would be dangerous. It is only at lower tides that you will be able to negotiate this headland close to the beach level. Even then, because the angle of these rocks is so steep and, because they are rather jagged and uneven, you may find that they are quite difficult to walk on or clamber over, especially when wet and slippy. However, it is only for a short distance and then you find yourself on the beach of Loughshinny Bay.

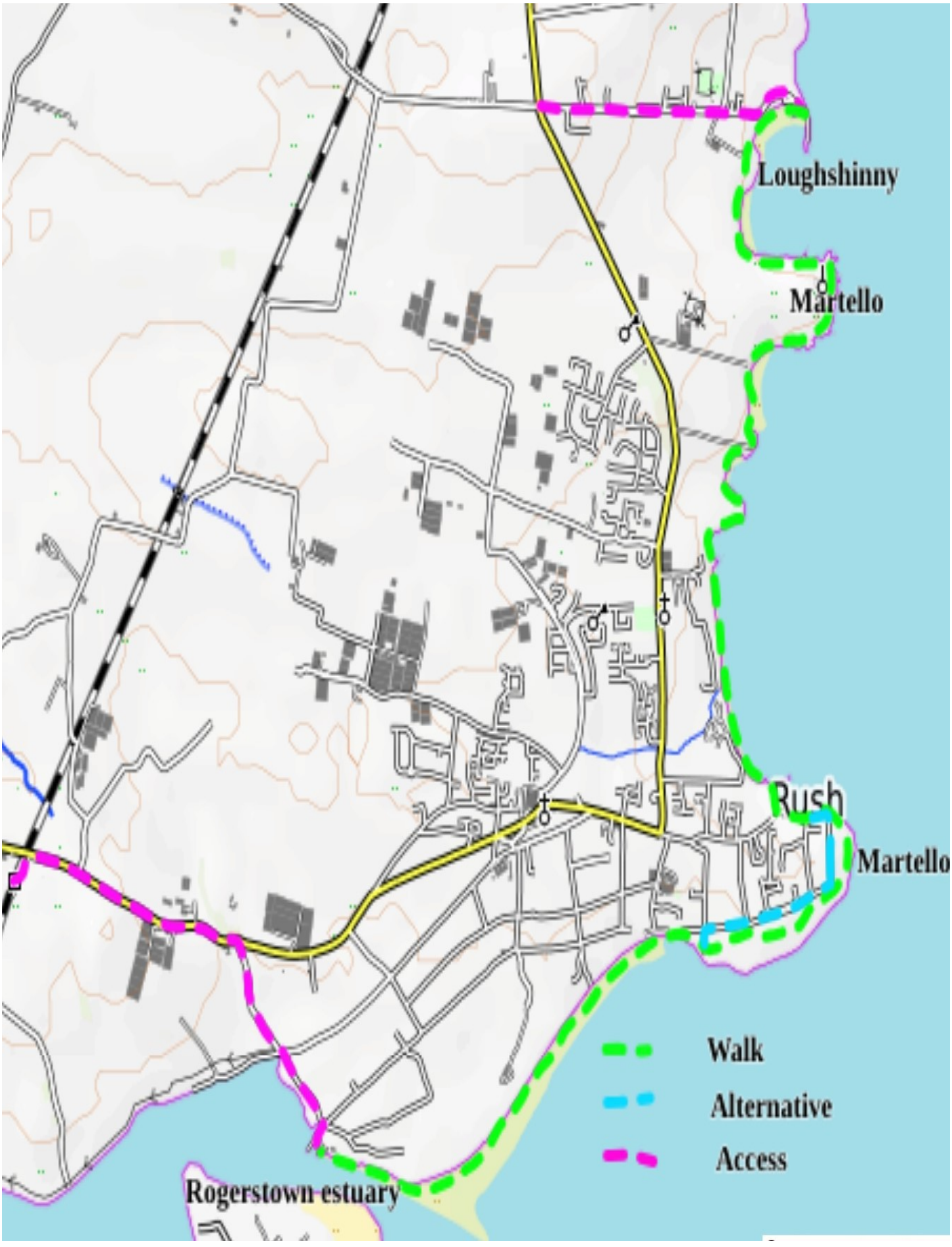
There is an option to go up onto the high ground of the headland before you reach that point. A small track follows the cliff edge for most of the remaining distance to Loughshinny. However, you may then find that you can not descend again onto the beach and you may have difficulty entering Loughshinny due to fencing of private properties. (The only realistic alternative would be to return all the way to Skerries and then complete the remaining short stretch of Loughshinny Bay, working your way back from the Loughshinny end!)

Loughshinny outfall viewed at high tide

Winter swimmers at Loughshinny

So, for the purposes of completing this section of the coastline, it is recommended that you stay at beach level (at low tide, obviously) and face the difficulties presented by having to clamber carefully over these sloping saw-tooth rocks (provided the tide allows) and then walk the length of this beach. Loughshinny Bay Beach is quite short and stony. At the end of the beach there is a very large concrete outfall structure on the beach. Immediately after this, your path rises up to meet the road at Loughshinny Pier at a point where there is a gap between two of the harbour cottages. Ahead of you is the pier and a picturesque boat-house beside a small green – a lovely place for a well-earned picnic. However, be advised that, at the time of writing, there are no catering facilities here at the pier-side. You may be lucky to find, at best, a coffee caravan nearby.

Loughshinny is a very small, unspoilt fishing village with a tiny harbour facing a fine sandy beach to the south. If you do not have a car waiting here for you, then you now need to follow the Loughshinny Park Road (the only road leading down to the harbour) for about 1.5km to its junction with the R128 Coast Road. There are bus-stops on either side here serving both Skerries and Rush respectively, or also back to the city. You will also find refreshment opportunities here at this crossroads.



Map 4 Loughshinny to Rogerstown

Chapter 4

Loughshinny to Rogerstown (~9km + 4km)

Most of the walking outlined in this chapter is along good beach surfaces or on reasonable headland paths. However, there are a couple of tricky spots along the way. There is a stopping opportunity at a pub, about halfway along this route, when you arrive at Rush Harbour. Indeed, if you wished to shorten or split the walk, Rush Harbour would be the obvious place to do that. After the harbour, a difficult section of coast around Rush headland can be avoided by staying on the road. Nevertheless, the route covering this section of the coastline is less suitable for anyone with infirmity and is not suitable for buggies. Once again, the route passes yet another golf course.

Access

Access from public transport to each end of this walk involves quite a bit of additional walking so, once again, a two-car solution might be considered. In that case, you should leave one car at Rogerstown Pier (Rush Sailing Club) and drive to Loughshinny Harbour to commence your walk.

The simplest public transport option is to take a train to Rush & Lusk Station and then Bus 33 or 33A from there to Loughshinny Park Road. Then walk that road for about 1.5km to reach Loughshinny Harbour.

The Walk

From Loughshinny Harbour, head off on the grassy track just above Loughshinny Beach. At the end of this track, a solid flight of steps brings you up onto high ground above the beach. There is a second larger stretch of beach extending beyond this point where the steps head up. Loughshinny is well-known for the interesting geological rock formations which are exposed here. You will see some of these from the high ground but, if you are particulary interested in viewing more, then at low tide you should pass on into the larger section of the beach before you come back and climb these steps.

Loughshinny Beach from above

Geological formations at Loughshinny

The path (possibly muddy in places) leads to the headland known as the Drumanagh Promontory. This headland with its very prominent Martello Tower has been a place of fortification since ancient times. Pass through a gate and turn left to keep to the perimeter of the promontory. From here on, you will again see warning signs about the dangers of the cliffs. From time to time you will have an opportunity to view, at close quarters, just how justifiable these warnings are.

This path brings you right around the historic promontory, passing on the sea side of the Martello Tower. At the end of the promontory, you pass through another gate and continue along further high ground above the beach of St.Catherine's bay. This bay is the site where the gas interconnector pipeline from the UK comes ashore and you will see markers for that pipeline and the sloping section where the cliff face was cut away to allow installation of the pipeline. You can drop down that slope onto the beach at this point or continue along the high ground. Once again, you have an opportunity to see some fascinating layers of the rock which make up the southern face of the promontory. At the end of this short beach, a path rises up again gently to join the path on the high ground and you continue along this, around the perimeter of another small bay. At the end of this bay, stepping stones have been loosely placed to allow you to cross a fairly sizable stream that is coming down between the fields.

Drumanagh Martello Tower.

Pipeline markers, St.Catherine's Bay.

After crossing, you can continue along the track again onto high ground. The town of Rush now comes clearly into view. The long North Beach of Rush is between you and the town. Lambay is out to the left. You come to a point where the path drops very steeply into a gully, allowing access down onto the northern end of this beach. You need to be careful negotiating this path. It really is steep. When you get down to the gully, you have yet another stream to cross. Hopefully there won't be too much water flowing and you'll manage to get your feet onto some dry stepping stones. You are now onto the long stretch of Rush North Beach.

Crude stepping stones across a stream.

Steep path into gully with stream.

Walk the length of this wonderful beach as far as the harbour. Here, steps lead up to a park with a playground, public toilets and a small car-park. Just across the road from this park is the Harbour Bar pub and restaurant, a very timely opportunity for some mid-walk refreshment, if required. (Also, if you wanted to cut short your walk at this point, you should follow Lower Main St. to the right for about 700m where you will find bus-stops which would allow you to return to your start or to Rush railway station.)

To continue your walk towards Rogerstown, you emerge from the park onto Harbour Road, turn left and follow Harbour Road around past the harbour. When you get to the main pier, you have a choice of options. The Rush Tower headland which now follows has a very rocky and stony coastline which can only be safely negotiated at low water. Even then, some of the rocks are covered in seaweed which will probably be wet and slippery, while others are jagged and challenging. If you wish to follow this route, then you should take the little path at the start of the pier that leads down onto the rocks. Provided the tide is out, you should be able to follow the coast around on the rocks. The going is a little bit tricky and tedious in places but there are also easier sandy stretches. Halfway around this headland you will notice the Rush Martello Tower and a coast guard lookout shelter above you on the grassy headland (with perhaps a rope to help you ascend and descend). This Martello is somewhat more neglected than many of the others. As you continue around the headland, there are a few more sandy patches and mixed rocky surfaces to traverse. You will eventually arrive onto Rush South Beach at the point where there is a fine car park with public toilets.

Rush North Beach, looking north

Rush Harbour

(To avoid those difficult rocky sections, or if the tide is not out, the alternative option is to stay on the road after the pier. A sharp bend to the right brings you onto Tower Road for about 300m past about a dozen private properties separating you from the coastline. The road turns sharply right again and then, facing Quay Road to the right, there is a little track to the left which will take you down to the coast along the edge of a field. However, this track may be very muddy and access onto the coast a little difficult. If you continue instead along Tayleur's Point for about 350m, there is an easier option to turn left facing Old Barack Lane. Or you can continue for a further 250m to the Bawn Road crossroads and turn left here to bring you down to the coastal route.)

Seal relaxing on seaweed-clad rocks.

Path from road to Rush South Beach.

From the car-park onwards, the route is simply along open beach until you arrive at the Rogerstown estuary. After a few hundred metres of beach, you will notice a line of rocks placed on the beach indicating where a path leads up towards Sandy Lane and the South Shore road. Shortly after that, dunes begin to rise on your right and you will soon be walking with the edge of Rush Golf course on your right hand side behind those dunes.

After about 2km of walking on the sand, the beach makes a distinct turn towards the right, heading into the Rogerstown estuary. At low tide, you should now be able to follow the remaining beach all the way to the slipway of Rush Sailing Club from where you can access the Coast Guard Road. At this slipway, you are looking

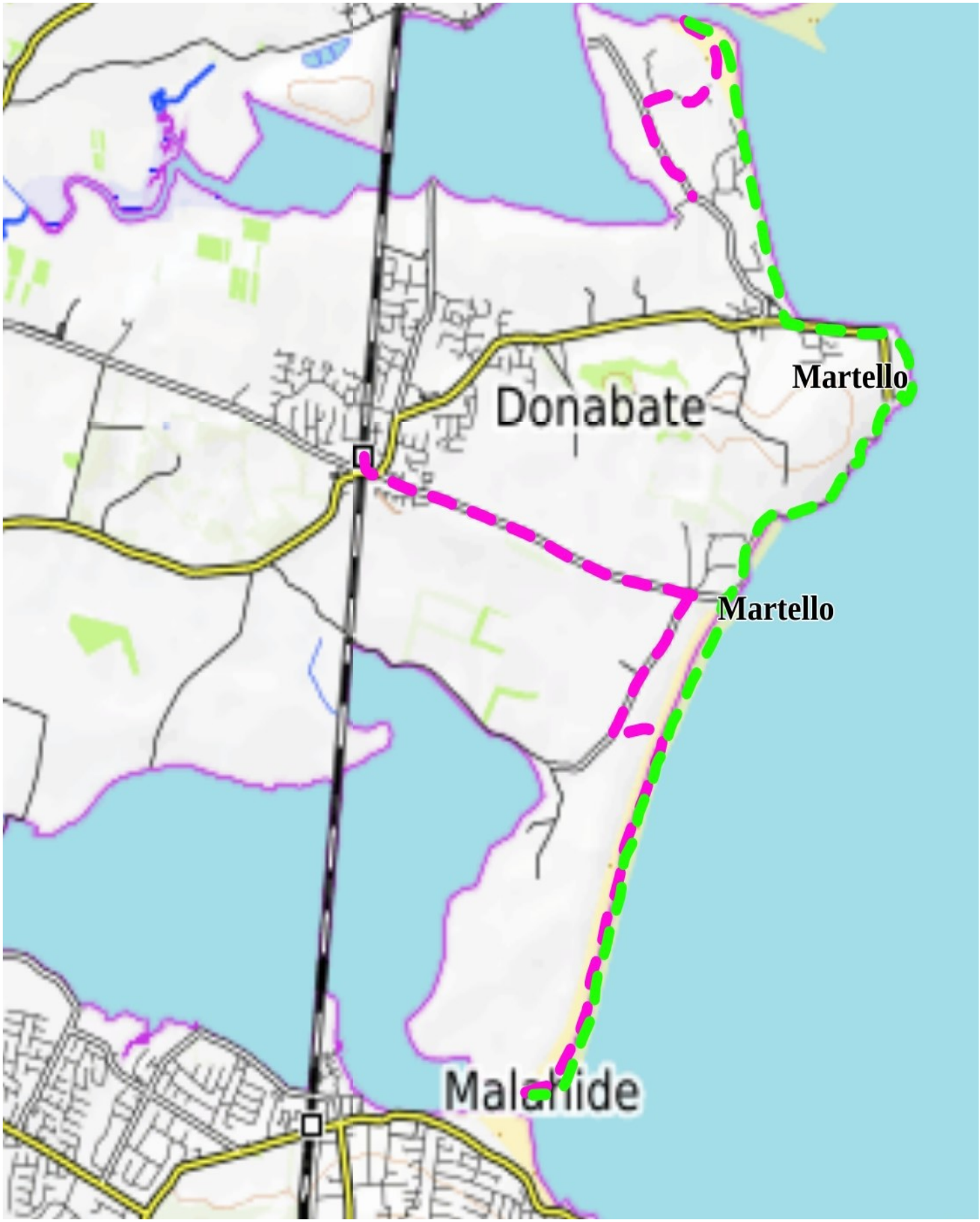
across the narrow estuary at the northern tip of Portrane which will be the starting point for the walk in the next chapter.

(If tidal conditions do not allow you to complete the final stretch of beach to the slipway then you will need to find an alternative. Just before the private properties that back onto the estuary, you should spot a small sandy track rising steeply into the dunes. This will bring you onto the edge of Rush Golf course. Make your way carefully to the left along the perimeter path, around a couple of tee boxes until a small track leads into the trees on your left. This track will lead you to the end of Coast Guard Road. Follow Coast Guard Road and Linkside to where you meet South Shore Road at the entrance to Rush Sailing Club.)

Rush South Beach from the car-park

Sailing Club slipway at Rogerstown

To return from your finishing point, at the entrance to Rush Sailing Club, you should head left along South Shore Road for about 350m until it crosses Channel Road and becomes Spout Road. Follow Spout Road for a further 500m to where it joins the R128, Whitestown Road. Turn left again here and there are bus-stops on both sides of the road. From here you can take the 33 or 33A eastwards to Rush Station or westwards back towards Skerries as far as Loughshinny Park Road.



Map 5 Portrane and Donabate

Chapter 5

Portrane and Donabate (~8.5km + 7.5km)

This walk covers the coastline which sits between the Rogerstown Estuary and the Broadmeadow Estuary. These two estuaries are major tidal ecological features of north Co.Dublin. Looking at a map of the county, the area between these two estuaries does not look particularly like a peninsula. The mouths of the estuaries are both so narrow that the coastline appears almost unbroken. However, there is no coast road along this stretch of coastline. The railway (with just one station at Donabate) utilises links onto this peninsula which form the closest coastal route. In fact, only two roads lead out onto this peninsula from the main R132.

Apart from the estuaries themselves and their associated wetlands, the Newbridge and the Portrane Demesnes are the dominant features of this peninsula. The Portrane Demesne encompasses the massive St.Ita's mental health facility. The peninsula incorporates the towns of Portrane and Donabate (which are rapidly developing as satellite suburbs of the city), while its coastline features two long beaches with a cliff section in between. There are also several golf courses on the peninsula.

Access

Walking the coast of this peninsula is a fairly straightforward and easy 8.5km from end to end. However, access to either ends of this walk is somewhat remote.

If you are using public transport, the Marsh Lane terminus of the 33B bus is the nearest that you can get to the northern tip of Portrane Beach. For example, you could take a train to Donabate Station and then catch the 33B bus from just down the road in Donabate to Marsh Lane. From there, you need to continue along Burrow Road, turn right onto Valley Lane and follow that lane until it bends left onto the dunes. Then continue walking across the dunes towards Rush Sailing Club and Rogerstown Pier until you reach the water's edge (about 1.5km from the bus terminus). You are now at the northern tip of this peninsula and you are facing the point where the walk described in the previous chapter ended.

If you are driving, this might be a good section for a two car solution. However, while car-parking is plentiful both in Portrane and at Donabate, parking is rather limited at the northern end of Portrane Burrow. Moreover, the south end of Donabate Beach cannot be accessed by car at all. So, even if using two cars, you will still need to walk quite a few additional kilometres at each end of this walk. Start by making your way to the northern tip of the peninsula as described above.

The Walk

When you are facing Rush Sailing Club, turn right and start heading south from the Rogerstown estuary along Portrane Beach.

Looking north to Rogerstown

Looking south down Portrane beach

Even on a very calm day, it is quite difficult to walk Portrane Beach when the tide is high. The local authorities are continuously fighting the erosion of the dunes and of properties that extend to the beach by placing and replacing concrete caissons close to the dunes to absorb the energy of the waves. Individual property owners have augmented these measures with their own attempts at defences. So, it can be quite difficult to walk along the high water mark. However, at lower tides, this is a very broad beach which is a delight to enjoy. In less than 45 mins you will arrive at the centre of Portrane where you can find a couple of pubs/cafes plus public toilets.

Erosion defences along Portrane beach

Lambay at its closest from Portrane

You now need to briefly join the road heading towards the headland. After a short stretch on the road, revert to the beach/rocks to go around the headland where you will find a delightful sequence of tiny beaches and easily traversible rocks. In a few minutes you come around the rocky headland at Portrane to find a delightful cove with changing facilities and toilets. At the left side of these facilities, rise up the steps onto the cliff path with views back to the Portrane Martello Tower and Tower Beach.

There is a fine car-park here with excellent views to Lambay Island. This island is probably at its closest point to the mainland here. If you have not already refreshed yourself in the village of Portrane, you might be lucky to catch a coffee truck at this car-park. Most of this peninsula is within sight of the Round Tower and water tower of St. Ita's which are quite close to this car-park.

Portrane's Tower Beach and Martello

Two towers dominate this peninsula

From here you continue south along the cliff path which leads to the beach at Donabate. As you go, you have views on Howth, Ireland's Eye and the Sutton isthmus, with the Dublin and Wicklow mountains forming a backdrop.

This popular cliff walk to Donabate Beach is about 2km long. The outer, more perilous path (complete with warning notices), gives access to some rocky promontories and you can see the interesting rock formations of the cliffs as you go. The outer route also provides excellent opportunities for spotting the habitats of sea birds along the cliff face. However, a safer option is to take the parallel inner walk which is protected from the outer one, at times by a wall, at times by a dike and occasionally just by a fence. At a point where there is a beach shelter, you get some very nice inland views of the gothic revival architecture of St.Ita's Hospital complex, including its clock tower. You can also access the demesne from here.

The cliff walk ends at the Shoreline Hotel, another opportunity for refreshment, if required. Immediately after the hotel, the rather precarious-looking Balcarrick Martello Tower is situated almost right down on the beach and must receive some considerable attack nowadays whenever easterly storms occur. There are toilet facilities here also. In fact, this walk is particularly well served with toilet opportunities.

The wonderful 3km stretch of Donabate beach with its high dunes now extends ahead of you. Bear in mind that this beach is effectively a dead end which finishes at the Broadmeadow Estuary. So, in undertaking this part of the coast, you will have to return the full length of the beach (unless you can succeed in hailing a passing boatman to ferry you across the estuary!).

Victorian buildings of St.Ita's

Donabate Martello Tower on the beach

Donabate Beach has traditionally been one of the most popular of the beaches north of Dublin city. In the middle of the last century when the family car had been popularised, many visitors would drive right out onto this beach and picnic directly from their cars. The dunes were a great source of entertainment for children. Sadly, this beach has also suffered recent erosion, though not as traumatic-looking as that seen on Portrane Beach. Efforts are made to reduce traffic into the dunes to try and preserve them. Behind those dunes, Corballis Golf Course extends a considerable distance down this peninsula. And behind that again, The Island Golf Course extends across to the estuary.

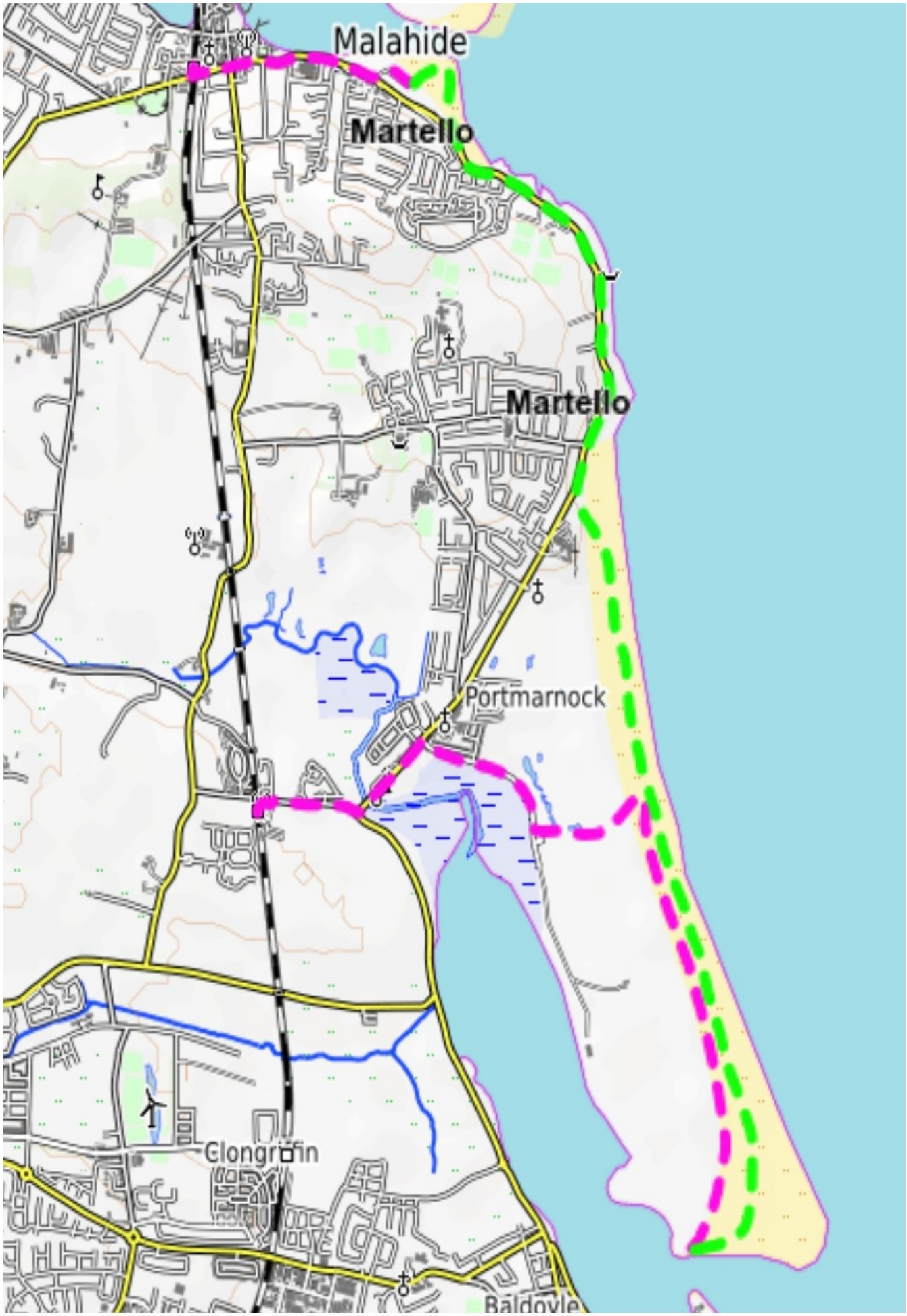
As the long straight beach eventually begins to turn, you see the expanse of Malahide tantalisingly close across the mouth of the Broadmeadow estuary. If you continue to follow the curve into the estuary, the sand eventually peters out and you find yourself at the start of a wetlands area. Its now time to head back towards the start of this long beach. You have a choice now to either retrace your steps along the beach itself or, for variety, it is possible to walk back part of the way along small paths between the dunes. However, you will ultimately reach the boundary of the golf course and, because of the steepness of the face of the dunes due to erosion, you may then find it difficult to drop back down onto the beach.

Donabate Beach and sand dunes

Malahide across the estuary

Before arriving back at the north end of the Donabate Beach, there is a further option to carefully take a right-of-way across the Corballis Golf Course – this option, while adding some variety, does not significantly shorten your route.

When you regain the road leading down to the hotel and Martello Tower, you will now have a 2.5km walk straight up New Road in order to arrive back at Donabate Station. On the other hand, if you have opted for a two-car solution, you will certainly appreciate having a car parked near the Shoreline Hotel.



Map 6 Malahide and Portmarnock

Chapter 6

Malahide and Portmarnock (~7km + 6km)

Malahide, formerly a small fishing port and now a major satellite suburb of the greater Dublin area, is located directly on the south of the large Broadmeadow Estuary. From here south to Baldoyle and Sutton, the lands along the coastline have been significantly populated with prime suburban developments but, thankfully, the coastline itself remains largely unspoilt. At the southern tip of Portmarnock Beach, the Portmarnock marshes and Baldoyle Estuary discharge into the Irish Sea through a narrow channel which separates Portmarnock from Sutton and the Howth headland.

Golf courses are once again a significant feature of the immediate coastal hinterland and, of course, you can expect to encounter some more Martello Towers!

Access

Unlike the previous chapter, access for this walk is relatively easy with several realistic options.

This stretch of coastline begins at the Malahide Beach Car Park, which is just about 15 minutes walk (1km) from the Malahide DART Station. Alternatively, you could take a bus to the Malahide Coast Road (Seapark Estate) stop on the sea-front. If you want to utilise two cars, you should leave one car at the Portmarnock Beach South Car Park and drive here to the Malahide Beach Car Park to begin your walk.

The Walk

From the car-park, take a moment to look north across the channel and see the southern tip of the Donabate Peninsula. That was the point where the walk detailed in the previous chapter ended. You will probably be struck by how quiet and isolated that peninsula is compared to the busy and lively atmosphere here on the south side of the estuary, even though it is such a short distance away. Looking to your left, you will see the vast expanse of the Broadmeadow Estuary as it opens up inland and you can see the rail crossing of that expanse extending out from the Malahide marina.

Southern tip of Donabate peninsula viewed from Malahide

Turn to your right and you now have the choice of walking either along the beach or dunes or on a grassy track between here and the road, or on the foot-path of the coastal road itself. After a short distance, you come to a concrete block with well-maintained public toilets. Shortly after that, Hick's Tower is evident across the Coast Road. This is one of the better-converted Martello Towers which is clearly used as a residence.

Hick's Tower, a tastefully converted Martello residence

Bathing shelter on the beach and Robswall Castle across the Coast Road

If you have chosen to continue walking on the beach, you will encounter some flat rocks at the headlands. Further on again, at the point where Robswall Castle is on the far side of the road, you will find bathing shelters for ladies and men at a suitable swimming location. This castle is much older than the Martello towers and was fortified to command the Malahide estuary.

As you round the next bend you come to another popular swimming location. At this stage, Ireland's Eye and Howth Head come into much clearer view. You are now entering Portmarnock. In general, this stretch of coastline seems to be a very popular route and you will probably encounter a steady stream of walkers of all stages of fitness plying this section in both directions.

As you approach yet another residentially converted Martello Tower, this time on the seaward side of the road, the seafront becomes somewhat rockier for a short

stretch. The long vista of Portmarnock Beach now stretches out into the distance ahead of you with an impressive backdrop of the Dublin and Wicklow mountains. You pass the White Sands Hotel across the road on your right and you come to more public toilets on your left, just at a point where you can drop down conveniently onto the beach. There is also a short concrete esplanade over a fine beach shelter. This is followed by a pretty roadside ice-cream kiosk which might well be a welcome refreshment point before your long walk down the Velvet Strand begins.

Near here is the Southern Cross Monument, *Eccentric Orbit*, an impressive sculptured limestone globe with bronze needle pointing to the North Star, commemorating an important event in aviation history which took place on this beach. In 1930, the final leg of the first east-west circumnavigation of the world took off from the Velvet Strand with Captain Charles Kingsford Smith and his crew aboard the *Southern Cross* for their Atlantic crossing to Newfoundland, New York and ultimately to California. Indeed, two years later, the first solo east-west Atlantic crossing also took off from this same beach.

The Velvet Strand is very appropriately nicknamed and you are likely to be struck by the particularly smooth surface texture of the sands here. It is remarkable that this distinctive texture seems to have survived generations of polluting activities which are hopefully nowadays somewhat reversed.

As you start down the beach, the Portmarnock Hotel and Jameson Golf Links are on your right hand side, behind the dunes. You are requested to stay off those dunes in the interest of their protection. That hotel and golf links were built on the site of the former home of a branch of the famous Jameson distilling family. The Jamesons had their own private golf course here in the late 1800s.

About halfway down the long beach, a concrete path leads up through the dunes. This path would bring you across this peninsula to the Portmarnock Beach South Car Park (more of that later). This path marks the boundary between the Portmarnock Hotel's Jameson Golf Links and the world-renowned private member's Portmarnock Golf Club which extends from here to the southern end of this peninsula. This latter links course has been home to many famous golfing tournaments and many of the world's most famous golfers have enjoyed playing this very special course which has been here since the 1890s.

You should be aware that the remaining stretch of the Velvet Strand is effectively a dead-end and, when you reach the tip of the peninsula, you will need to retrace your steps back along the beach to this point.

Portmarnock's Velvet Strand stretching as far as the eye can see!

Looking south across the estuary to Sutton Golf Club

For now, continue walking on the velvety smooth strand itself. Along here, the high watermark deposits a significant accumulation of varied seashells and you might begin to appreciate why *Cockles and Mussels* is such a traditional Dublin song! Perhaps the unique sand texture of the Velvet Strand is attributable to the continuous breakdown of shells such as these.

Immediately after the concrete path, some rock defences have been neatly placed to protect the dunes and the Portmarnock Golf Club course. Fortunately, erosion does not appear to have been as evident along this section of the coastline as in previous chapters. As you approach the end of this walk at the southern tip of the peninsula, you might notice yet another Martello Tower on Ireland's Eye, out to sea.

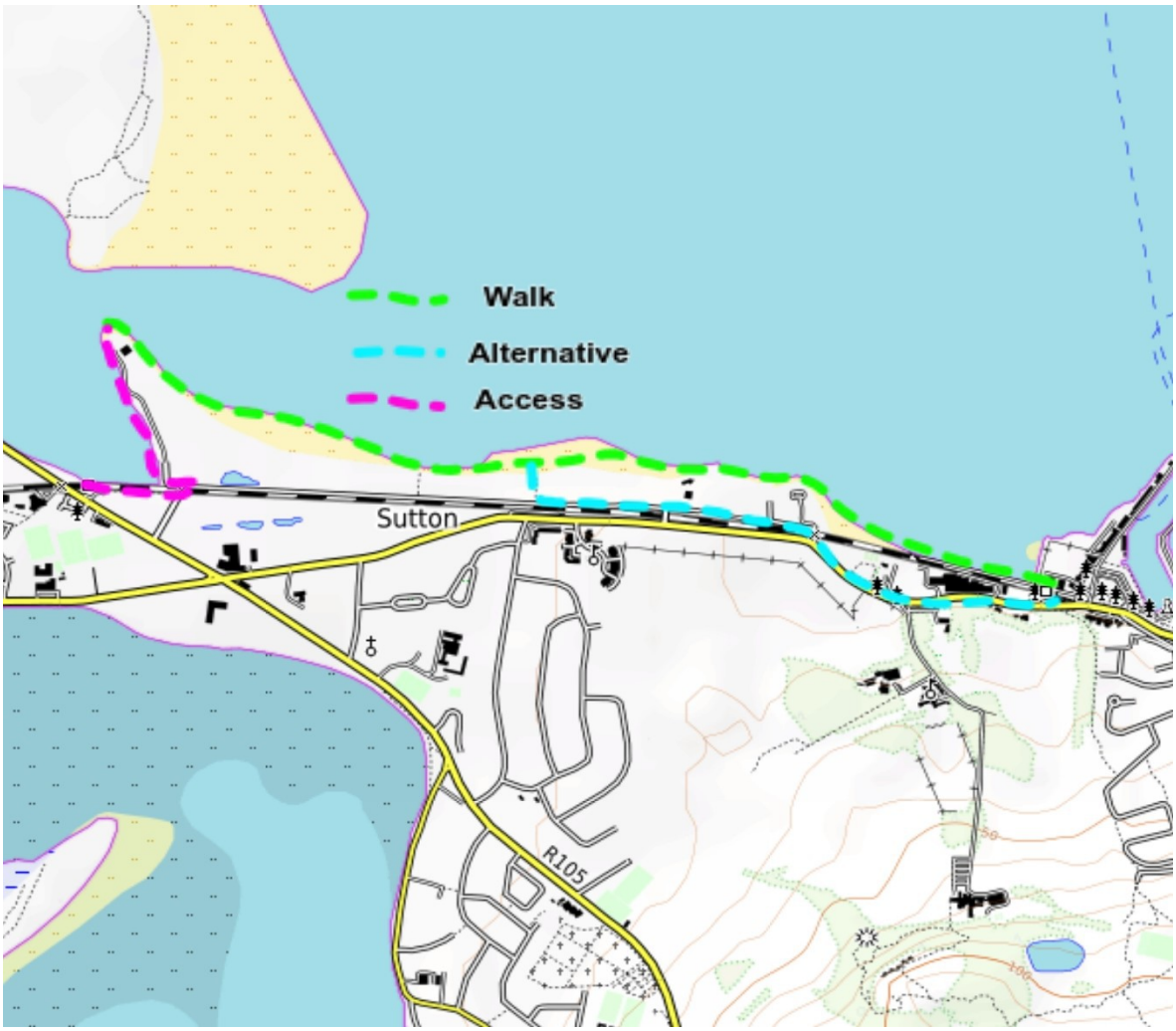
Just as in the case of Donabate Peninsula, you now reach a point where the next stretch of the Dublin coastline is tantalisingly close across the mouth of the estuary. However, as indicated in the next chapter, you will have to approach that walk from a totally different starting point. A warning sign on the beach advises against attempting to cross the channel. Estuaries like these are notorious for very strong currents as well as steep shelving and shifting sands. In spite of repeated warnings, unfortunate tragedies regularly occur here and at other similar estuaries. At it's narrowest point, you are looking across the mouth of this estuary at the clubhouse of yet another golf course, Sutton Golf Club.

You have now reached the point where today's section of coastline ends and you really ought to turn here and head halfway back up the beach to avail of that path that was mentioned earlier, leading across to Portmarnock Beach South Car Park. However, if you are still enjoying the delightful beach, you might like to continue a little bit further as the beach turns up the west side of the peninsula. You will eventually (as in the case of Donabate) run out of beach after about a further 10 minutes. Here you will hit a marshy area where it would be difficult to continue and, unless you are equipped with waders, or a boat, (or perhaps a prestigious golf

club membership), you will just have to turn around and retrace your additional steps also.

Allow about 25 minutes (2.5km) to regain the path across the peninsula. You then have a delightful 10-minute stretch of boardwalk (0.5km) to enjoy through the dunes, bringing you to the car-park where there are further toilet facilities. As you have doubtless noticed, this path aligns directly under the main flight path for Dublin airport. Under prevailing wind conditions, your walk along this path will normally be entertained by several flights making their approach to the airport, while, in the event of easterly winds, your conversations will likely be broken by the somewhat noisier departure take-offs.

If you have opted for a two-car access method, then this car-park is where your return car should be. Otherwise, a further 15 minute walk along the dyke on the left-hand side of Golf Links Road, turning left onto Strand Road (1km) will bring you to the Hazel Court bus stop. Or, if you carry on to the end of Strand Road and turn right onto Station Road, you will arrive at Portmarnock DART station in a further 1km.



Map 7 Sutton to Howth

Chapter 7
Sutton to Howth (3km)

This chapter presents a delightful short stroll along the north-facing coastline of the Howth peninsula. The walk is extremely easy with just one proviso – it really needs to be tackled when the tide is not in! Access to the start of the walk might be difficult when the tide is in. More critically, half way along the walk, a section of the beach becomes impassable at higher water and the only alternative is a rather dull section along roads without sight of the coast. Consequently, it is particularly recommended that you check the tides before setting out to do this walk.

Access

Apart from being a very short walk, this is also one of the easiest segments to access along the County Dublin coastline. Sutton DART Station is just 1.2km from the start of the walk and the walk ends right at Howth DART Station. These locations are also well served by bus routes. In addition, there is ample car-parking at both ends, particularly at Howth. (It would be difficult to justify a 2-car solution for this brief walk. On the other hand, you might be tempted to complete a return to your starting point by undertaking the walk in both directions.)

If you exit Sutton DART station by the main entrance, turn left immediately and follow the footpath that runs parallel to the railway, towards the east. (Note, if you alight on the Howth-bound platform and exit directly onto the roadway at the level crossing, you should turn left across that crossing and turn left again, passing in front of the main station entrance.) At the end of this footpath, turn left across the railway and then left again onto Burrow Road. Follow Burrow Road around to the right towards the private entrance to Sutton Golf Club.

Just before the entrance, a small track to the left leads down onto the beach. This route may be difficult at higher tides. Follow the beach to the north-most tip of this short spur, just behind Sutton Golf Club clubhouse.

You are now looking across the estuary at the southern tip of the Portmarnock peninsula and Portmarnock Golf Club, with aircraft flying regularly overhead, i.e. looking back at the finish point of the previous chapter's stretch of coastline. To the right of that is Lambay in the distance and then Ireland's Eye. Further to the right is the stretch of coastline that we are about to follow today. This is where today's walk starts and you can already see your destination, Howth Harbour, at the far end.

Looking north at Portmarnock

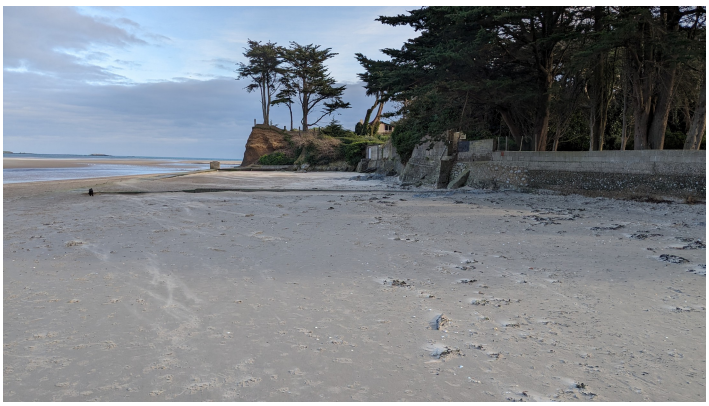
Looking east towards Howth

The Walk

Head eastward along the beach which stretches before you towards Howth Harbour. The beach is broad and flat with Sutton Golf Course on your right hand side. After about a kilometre, you come to an access pathway from Burrow Road onto the beach. There are toilet facilities here. (If tidal conditions prevented you from following the route above, then this is the point where you should join the beach).

Continue eastwards along the beach towards a prominent headland with tall trees precariously surviving atop. When the tide is in, you may be unable to pass this headland so you may have to return to Claremont road via another access path, just before the headland. (In the event that you have to revert to the road, then you will unfortunately have to follow that road, and later the main Howth Road, all the way into Howth, as there are no further beach access points until there). Otherwise, continue along the beach which is lined and dotted with concrete drainage facilities around the headland. Some impressive private properties back onto the beach along here, each with their own private access gates.

The Burrow Beach



The critical headland with tall trees

There are approximately three sections to the headland which might block your progress when the tide is in. But as you round the third one which is marked by a castellated tower, you come onto Claremont Beach which extends the remaining short distance to Howth.

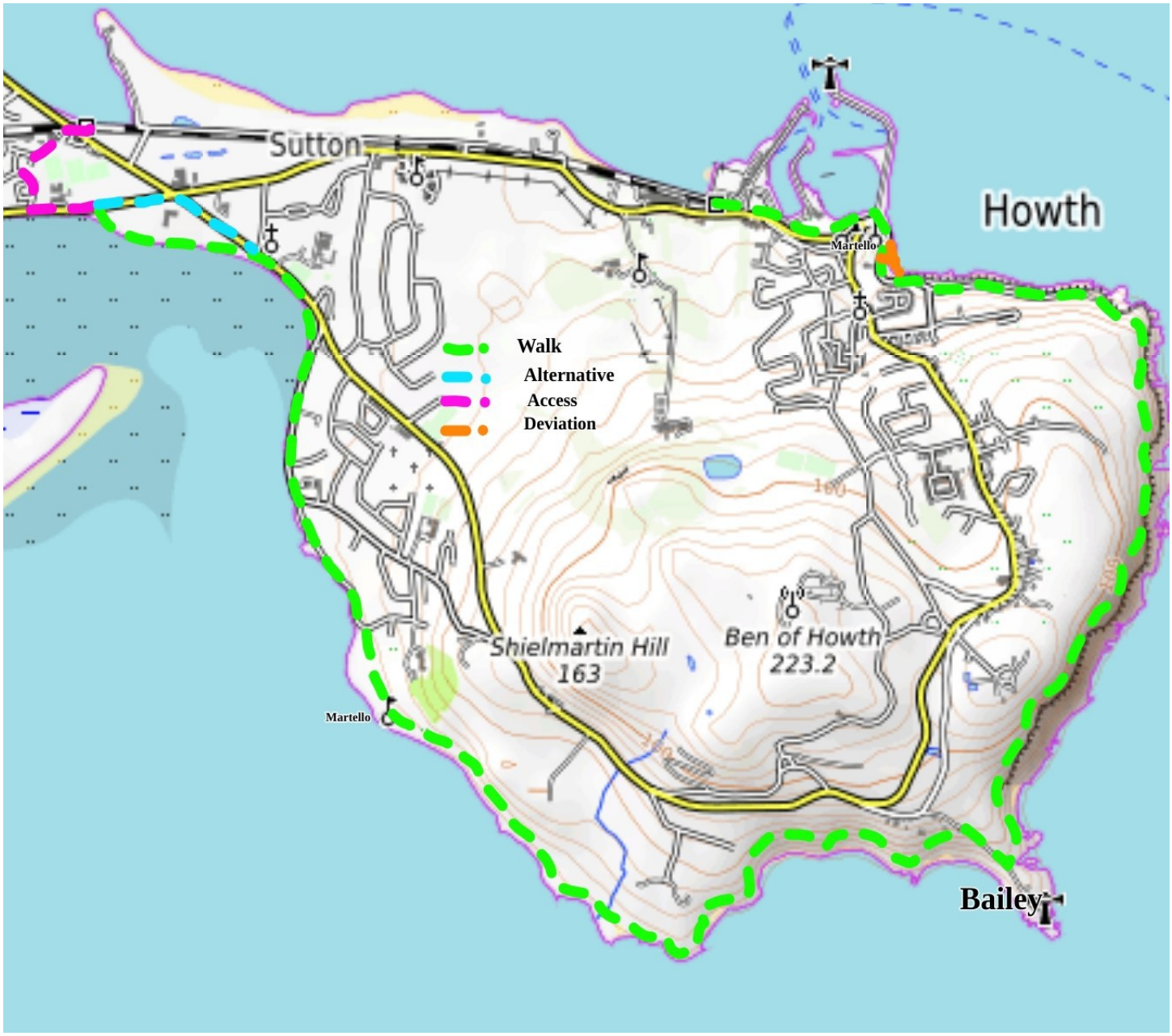
When you reach the blue disused toilets built against the railway fence, there is a concrete walkway from here all the way into Howth. There are modern toilets immediately to your right at the end of this concrete pathway. Howth DART station is further to the right.

Looking back along Claremont Beach

You have now arrived at Howth Harbour, the end of today's walk.

Given that this has been such a short walk, now might be an ideal opportunity to spend an hour or two exploring Howth harbour or the very interesting and historic town of Howth with its plentiful provision of restaurants and refreshments as well as a lively market. Look out for seals in the harbour and for the ancient Abbey above the town, as well as Ye Olde Hurdy-Gurdy Museum of Vintage Radio, housed in Howth's Martello Tower.

When you have finished, you can simply take the DART back from the Howth terminus.



Map 8 Howth Cliff Path

Chapter 8

Howth Cliff Path (~11.5km)

This walk is probably the most challenging, the most exciting and the most rewarding of any of the sections of Dublin's coastline. It is presented here as a single section because the remainder of the Howth headland is very much a single unit. (Flat beach walking, which has featured in most of the chapters up to this, including the previous chapter, will not be found on this part of the Howth peninsula). The initial eastern section of this walk is mostly on exposed hillside tracks, directly above the rocky cliffs facing the Irish Sea. The subsequent southern section of the walk has quite a different character, a winding lane mostly between hedges and property boundaries with cliffs dropping into coves which face into Dublin Bay. It would be quite feasible to divide this Cliff Walk section in two and the optimal point for doing so is mentioned in the walk text.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Howth Harbour is definitely worth exploring. However, this walk has enough content in it, so exploring the harbour should probably be done on a separate day.

Access

Access to the Cliff Path is very simple, either by DART directly to Howth Station or by bus to Howth Harbour. If travelling by car, there is ample parking near the harbour at Howth and you can easily return to your car by DART or bus from Sutton at the end of the walk. Alternatively, it might be better to park near the end of the walk and start by taking the DART or bus from Sutton to Howth. Or, you could park at the very beginning of the Cliff Path itself, but that will entail a bit of walking after the end of the walk in order to retrieve your car.

There is one further unusual access possibility for this walk. A ferry from Dun Laoghaire or Dublin Port, right onto the West pier at Howth! It will certainly make for a very long session but, on a fine summer's day, it could be a most enjoyable experience and one which will certainly add a whole new perspective to your appreciation of Howth Head.

The Walk

The DART station is located just at the start of the West Pier. Turn left as you exit the main station entrance. There are modern public conveniences just next to the station. Proceed straight along the harbour front, passing the Yacht Club and continue as far as The King Sitric Seafood Bar which faces the start of the East Pier. There are more public toilets here at this pier.

Continue along the road as it rises quite steeply with a few houses and apartments between you and the sea. Note, this is one of the few locations where the recommended walk is separated from the sea by private buildings. It is possible, at the end of the apartments, to drop down some steep flights of steps onto Balscadden Bay Beach which is a favourite bathing location on the seaward side of those buildings. However, you can traverse only the short length of that beach and then you need climb back up to the road again by the same steps.

When you get to the bend at the top of the rise, look back and you'll realise that you've just passed a Martello Tower located on high ground with a commanding view over the harbour. That tower houses Ye Olde Hurdy Gurdy Museum of old radios and gramophones. The road now bends around to the left and you see that it is now heading towards the first of the cliffs. Continue on past some more distinctive cottages and private properties, again separating you from the coastline. At the end of the road, you arrive at a car park with public facilities (these are the last such facilities that you will encounter until Sutton). From the end of the car park, a concrete footpath leads you sharply up to the higher ground above the cliffs. The main cliff path is waymarked with a choice of routes (purple, red, blue and green). Our route will follow the purple waymarks for most of the way. Sutton is indicated as being 9km from here. Just at this point, the array of tracks heading in all directions is slightly bewildering but the main cliff walk will quickly become fairly evident.

Howth Martello and East Pier

The open hillside and dramatic cliffs

The next section of the route is over open hillside, right on the edge of the cliffs. The condition of the main path is good and is not at all dangerous in itself. However, please be aware that these cliffs are very dangerous and exposed without any protection. It is strongly advised to stay on the main path and don't be tempted to divert onto some of the small tracks, however interesting they might appear. Be particularly careful if you have young children or dogs. Once you leave the concrete, the path is no longer suitable for buggies and certainly not for bicycles. Continue for a kilometre or two, passing through some waymarked stone bollards. As you round a bend, the Bailey lighthouse suddenly comes into view ahead of you, with the Sugarloaf and Bray Head in the backdrop.

A little further on you come to some tracks branching off to the right. (These lead quite steeply up steps, away from the main path. The blue, red and green routes are waymarked up that direction which leads to Howth Summit where you can get a bus or follow the roads back down to the harbour. This is the point at which you could choose to split this walk. If you decide to do so, then you should aim to return to this point at a future date to complete the remaining path to Sutton which is now indicated as 7.5km from here, still following the purple waymarks).

Bailey Lighthouse and Irish Sea.

Coves on the south side of Howth.

The path crosses a gully with a small stream flowing down to the sea and immediately afterwards there is a turn to the left which heads down the little peninsula towards the Bailey lighthouse. From here, the full expanse of the Dublin mountains have now also opened up into view. You can choose to carry straight on along the waymarked trail which is now bounded by some private properties (the first private properties you will have encountered since leaving the road). If you take this left hand path down towards the Bailey, you will eventually arrive at the walled compound of the lighthouse and it's keeper's house. Just outside the gates of the compound is a favourite viewing and photo opportunity. From here you get a great sense of how the lighthouse commands views of the bay and right out over the Irish Sea.

If we were to keep strictly to our rule of not tracing the coastline up into estuaries, then we could arguably stop following the coastline here and start again over at Dalkey or Killiney on the south side of the bay which constitutes the Liffey estuary. However, that would be to miss some incredibly interesting and best known sections of the Dublin coastline!

We now take the well surfaced straight road that serves the Bailey lighthouse and head back towards some of those fine properties up near the Summit. Just before a house called Gale Point, you'll see a signpost towards the left for the purple waymarked trail, indicating 5.5km to Sutton from here. So, resume the waymarked cliff path here. The character of the path now changes completely and it continues here as a very well defined narrow path with fencing, mostly on the sea side and with hedges on the boundaries of some wonderful properties on the landward side.

You pass one extremely isolated white-washed cottage on the left, facing the Bailey lighthouse. As you proceed, there are a few minor paths leading down to some of the very secluded coves along the stretch. However, they are quite precarious-looking paths which would involve considerable altitude drop from the main path, followed by having to climb back up the same track to resume your journey.

When you reach a T-junction in the path, turn left following the purple trail markers. Depending on the weather you may encounter a few small muddy patches, but they are usually not really a problem. You pass an unusual marker where the 1852 Anglo-Irish Telegraph Cable comes ashore. Eventually, the main trail will descend right down to one of the coves, albeit a stony one. This is known as O'Pint Beach. If you can get there before late afternoon while the sun is still shining into the cove, you will appreciate just how these south-facing coves are real sun-traps.

1852 Telegraph Cable marker

O'Pint's Beach

As you round a corner of the walled section of trail, another Martello Tower comes into view. The full coastline of North Dublin Bay is now also spread out before you. Most of that coastline is, of course, Bull Island which will be the subject of the next chapter. Before reaching the Martello Tower you drop down again to another stretch of beach which you actually have to briefly traverse and which, at high water, might be difficult in stormy weather. You next arrive at the aptly named area of Red Rock. This feature is quite distinguishable from the south side of the Bay and even from the Dublin Mountains.

Sutton Martello (which you can rent)

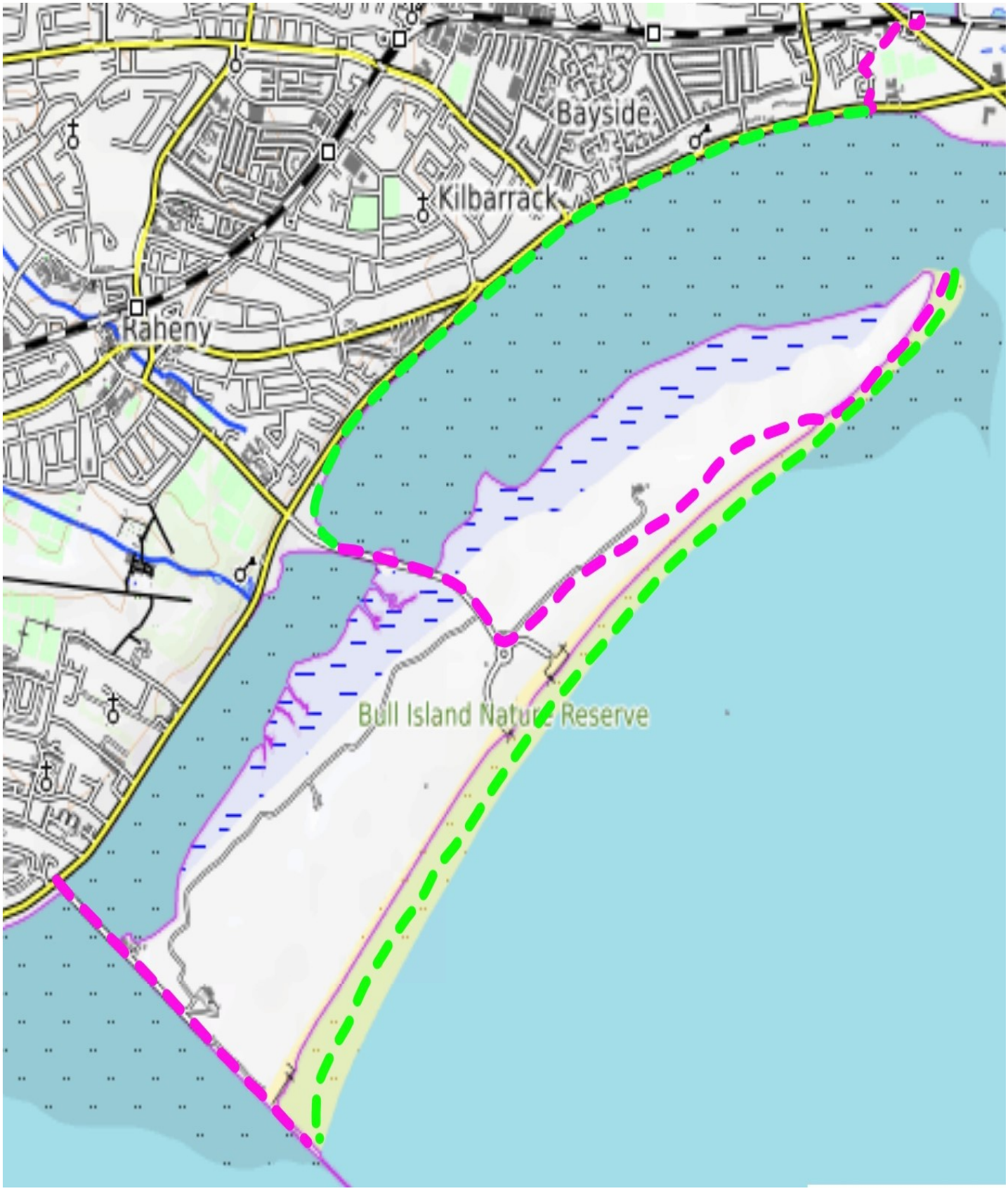
Sutton Bay and Howth Head

Just after here, a signpost indicates a path that heads north over the hill of Howth and on into Howth. This is where we cease following the purple waymarks (that trail is colourfully known as the Bog of Frogs Trail). We now carry on along the main track towards Sutton.

The quality of the track improves further (the final stretch is once again fit for buggies) and you arrive at the Sutton Martello Tower which, at the time of writing, is uniquely available for rental as an AirBnB. Note the architecturally striking Sutton Castle, nestled among the trees to your right. This was formerly a fine hotel but is now apartments.

The trail eventually joins the road at Martello Terrace where you carry straight on along Strand Road towards Sutton, eventually reaching a short stretch of sea-front park. This parkland is directly facing the north-eastern tip of Bull Island, which we will cover in the next chapter. At the end of the park, tides permitting, you might like to drop down onto the beach and finish your walk where concrete steps lead up to the main coast road just before Sutton at the St.Fintan's School bus stop. (However, if the tide is too full, that final stretch of beach may just be impassible. In that case you should continue along Greenfields Road to the crossroads, turn left and arrive at the same point where the concrete steps lead up to the main coast road.)

Sutton DART station is just a few minute's walk towards the right from here and there are bus stops immediately adjacent also.



Map 9 Bull Island

Chapter 9

Bull Island (5/12.5km + 4.5km)

This next stretch of coastline is the wonderful beach of Bull Island.

Bull Island is a relatively new feature of Dublin Bay. Although a sandbank may have existed here before, the island was effectively formed when the Great South Bull Wall and the North Bull Wall were built. These walls were planned in an effort to force the river and tidal flows to scour the Port channel and improve the access for shipping into Dublin. The construction methods of each of the two walls are radically distinct. The South Wall, which took over a century to build, is a solid wall of massive granite blocks, rising above the high tide water level; the North Wall was loosely constructed over just four years using irregular rocks and boulders so that it is permeable. Moreover, its height is such that the high water can flow over the furter reaches of the wall. As a consequence, silt which is scoured from the channel out into the bay on the receding tide, returns and tends to accumulate against the outside of the North Bull Wall, creating Bull Island which continues to grow to this day. This was truly an island which, for years, was connected to the mainland only by a light wooden bridge at the landward end of the North Wall. The island and the sloblands between it and the mainland form an invaluable ecological resource. The island also accommodates two private golf courses and, of course, the extraordinary stretch of continuous beach which extends over its entire length on the seaward side. This beach has been known to generations of Dubliners as Dollymount Strand. In the 1960s, a causeway was built linking the island to the mainland near the corner of St.Anne's Park in Raheny so, strictly speaking, Bull Island is no longer an island.

Access

Traditionally, access to Bull Island was by bus or tram and then via the old wooden bridge at the south-west end. Buses continue to serve this point and also the causeway, further along the coast road.

Nowadays, most people arrive by car. Apart from service roads, there is no traffic circulation on the island. However, cars can drive out onto the island via the causeway where parking is facilitated. Cars also have limited access using the wooden bridge and parking is also facilitated where the beach meets the North Bull Wall, so a two-car solution is an obvious possibility.

However, for purists who might prefer to continue the full coastal experience, the walk notes here describe the route starting from St.Fintan's High School at Sutton,

where the Chapter 8 walk finished. Access to Sutton is easiest either by DART or bus. Please note that the full walk plus access, as described here, will amount to some 14km. Also, those interested in birdwatching or observing nature will need to allow considerably more than the indicative times suggested here.

The Walk

Starting from St.Fintan's High School, Sutton, you follow the coastal path for about 3km, until you reach the causeway to the island. The path and cycle track are well surfaced and pleasantly separated from the coastal road and its footpath by the sea wall. So this section of the walk is very easy and quite pleasant. You are walking beside what is effectively an estuary once again, this time it's the Santry River estuary. The coastal stretch along this first section of walk is a valuable breeding ground for many species of migratory birds. After 1km, you pass Kilbarrack Burial Ground on the right hand side of the road. This cemetery, described as *"the healthiest graveyard in Ireland . . . because it was so close to the sea"*, features in the writings of Brendan Behan. After a further 1km, Howth Road branches off from the coast road towards the right. Then, as you approach the causeway, you take a small track which branches off through the grass towards the left. Up until now you have been walking on a well-surfaced coastal footpath/cycleway parallel to the coast road. This track now cuts the corner of the junction leading to the causeway. Note that diagonally across that junction is the large St. Ann's Park, formerly a Guinness estate. As you pass a copse of trees, the little track passes over the outfall of the culverted Santry River.

Rejoin the road and head out across the causeway onto the island itself. Because of the wildlife and ecological protection measures, it is recommended that you should not attempt to walk the full perimeter of the island. Note that the island is divided into protected zones, as signposted. The north is not recommended due to its protected nature and also the lack of drainage which leaves the path difficult in places.

(If you have opted to limit your walk to just the coastal strip of Bull Island, you could drive out onto the island, park here and then make your way on foot to the north-east end of the beach to complete the walk from there.)

Follow the causeway road until you have passed the entrance to St. Ann's Golf Club on the left. Immediately after the entrance to the Golf Club, take a track that leads into the dunes, just before the roundabout. From here, follow the southern perimeter of the golf course. Ireland's Eye should be visible directly ahead of you and beyond Sutton. The tracks through the dunes fork, divide and cross frequently, but as long as you keep Ireland's Eye and Sutton more or less straight ahead of you, you won't go wrong. To get to the north-east tip of the island, you will need to walk

approximately the same distance that you have already covered if you started from Sutton. This walk through the dunes is very pleasant and easy-going. In fact, it is fascinating that you can enjoy such a sense of isolation, surrounded by pure nature, at this close proximity to the centre of the capital city!

St.Anne's Clubhouse from the dunes

Howth, seen from among the dunes

After 1km, you pass close to the clubhouse of St. Anne's Golf Club. About 1.5km further on, with a few of the north-most trees and shrubs on the island to your left, the main track through the dunes turns slightly towards the right. You should eventually break through the dunes and out onto the beach. Here you should turn left for a further 0.5km, if you want to complete the full experience of going to the tip of the island. Bear in mind that you are now in some of the highest protected areas of the island (red zone) and you should do nothing that would disturb the wildlife or damage the nature. When you arrive at the extreme tip of the island you will be looking across the sound, close to where the walk in the previous chapter ended. The tip of Ireland's Eye is visible just to the left of the spire of Sutton Catholic Church. Sutton Martello Tower is directly to your right.

Sutton viewed from the tip of the island

The long stretch of Dollymount Strand

You have now reached the north-east tip of Bull Island and your pursuit of the coastal walk can begin in earnest. Turn around and retrace your steps along the beach. (Footprints in the sand will most likely indicate that you are not the first to double back at this point). This time, stay on the beach, that wonderful beach known to generations of Dubliners as Dollymount Strand. As you walk, you will now have the iconic twin stacks of Poolbeg Power Station as your guide. (In fact,

these are not twin stacks as the one on the right is older and slimmer than the slightly newer one on the left). In spite of the fact that the island is reputedly still growing in size, you will notice that the dunes along here are suffering some erosion, presumably due to the increased severity of storms resulting from climate change.

Dune erosion at the north of the beach

Picnic tables and warm showers

You pass the area where the causeway joins the island and where some car parking on the beach is facilitated. From here on, there are some picnic tables set into the beach and, believe it or not, a few solar-powered warm showers for bathers. As you proceed, it becomes more apparent that the two great walls of Dublin Port are ahead of you and you will hopefully be treated to the sight of significant shipping entering and exiting that Port between the distinctive green and red lighthouses. Along here, you may also enjoy the sight of kite-surfers availing of the conditions just off the beach.

Ships exiting Dublin Port

North Bull Wall at the end of the beach

At the end of this 5km beach, you eventually reach the North Bull Wall with its distinctive cream-coloured concrete Art Deco beach shelters, so typical of the Clontarf area. This is now the end of your coastal walk on Bull Island. If you have been following the chapters of this guide in successive order, you have now completed all of the coastline of north Co.Dublin as far as the Port.

REALT NA MARA MEMORIAL
TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN HONOUR OF THE
MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY THIS MEMORIAL
WAS BLESSED AND DEDICATED BY
MOST REV DR DERMOT RYAN ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN
ON 24TH SEPTEMBER 1972.
AVE MARIA

Réalt na Mara memorial statue

Lighthouses at the mouth of Dublin Port

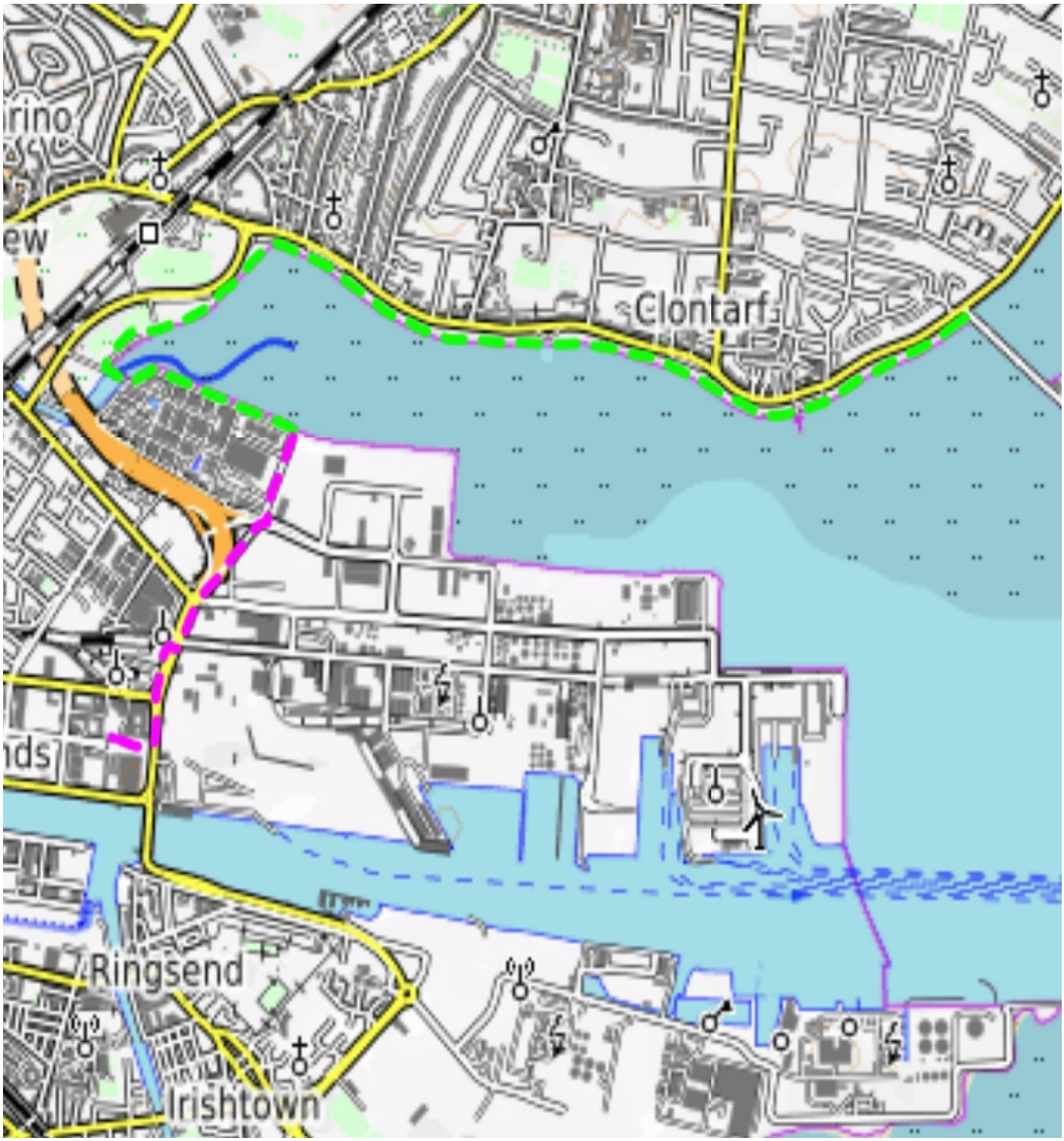
From where you are standing on the North Bull Wall at this point, you are looking straight across the entrance of Dublin Port to the point on the Great South Bull Wall where the walk described in Chapter 10 starts (just to the left of the Poolbeg Power Station fuel tanks). Immediately to your left on this North Bull Wall, the Réalt na Mara (Star of the Sea) memorial statue marks the end of the walkable stretch of the Wall. Beyond that, notice how the height of the unsurfaced wall structure drops to a level below high water. Unlike the south Wall, it is not possible to walk beyond this point nor to access the Green lighthouse at the end of the Wall.

Royal Dublin Golf Clubhouse

The Wooden Bridge

To return from here, you should turn right and walk 1.5km along the North Bull Wall directly towards the mainland. You pass several bathing shelters, the car parking area at the end of the beach and a small containerised coffee shop, then the Royal Dublin Golf club. Just before you cross the wooden bridge, you pass some old caretaker cottages dating back to early days of the wall.

Buses are available when you reach the Clontarf Road.



Map 9a Tolka Estuary

Chapter 9a

Tolka Estuary (~4km +1.5km)

It was stated at the outset that estuaries would not be included in this guide. For several reasons, an exception is made here in this addendum to Chapter 9. Firstly, this walk is quite a logical continuation from where you left off at the end of Chapter 9. Secondly, this walk covers a particulary historic area of the Battle of Clontarf. Thirdly, there is no longer any question of having to negotiate marshy sloblands along the edge of this estuary. On the contrary, the Clontarf section of the route is a particularly pleasant promenade along the water's edge. There are plentiful opportunities along here, just across the road, for a coffee break or something more substantial. And finally, the walk described here has the potential to be extended, hopefully in the not-too-distant future, to bring you to the Liffey itself at the eastern tip of the Docks. It would appear that considerable work has already been undertaken on that extension. Sadly, at the time of writing, a recreational path to fully attain that objective is not yet completed. Nevertheless, it does afford some sense of the scale of Dublin Docks.

Access

The walk starts at the Wooden Bridge to Bull Island and this is accessible by bus. If using a car, you might chose to park out on the island. At the end of the walk, a route is described to the Luas terminus at the Point.

The Walk

With your back to the bridge, head south-west along the promenade, in the direction of the city. The promenade is separated from the busy road by a wide landscaped stretch of well-maintained park, planted with islands of trees. This is supposedly part of the area where the Battle of Clontarf took place in 1014. It is reported that up to 10,000 men were slain in one day, including most of the leaders. For a pre-firearms battle, that seems a rather incredible level of slaughter. Nevertheless, it was clearly a very major event. All along this promenade, colourful information boards have been placed relating aspects of the history of that great event.

This whole area was reclaimed from the sea in the 1920s and the promenade was developed in the 1950s. Prior to that, Clontarf had always suffered regular severe flooding from the unprotected seafront and most householders were permanently equipped with sandbags for protection of their individual residences. (Unfortunately, due to climate changes, sandbags have once again become a necessity in this area). After about 3km you come to the end of the promenade at a junction where Alfie Byrne Road turns to the left.

Clontarf Promenade

Clontarf Baths

Immediately before the road junction, take the footpath to the left by waters edge. Stay by the water's edge when the path reduces to a track and follow it through a narrow gap, designed to keep motorbikes out. The track, which might be muddy in places, rises to skirt the East Wall Water Sports facility and emerges extremely narrowly at the entrance of that Sports Centre onto the Eastpoint Causeway which leads into a newly developed office complex. (Note, that section of track and the narrow entrances would not be suitable for buggies. However, you could alternatively follow Alfie Byrne Road and turn left onto Eastpoint Causeway).

Follow this road to the left to cross the final bridge over the Tolka. Turn left again immediately onto a pleasant footpath between hedges, still following the water's edge but, this time, on the other side of the estuary. You'll notice that some nice landscaping has been completed here to ensure that the industrial Docks area is initially quite well concealed. Hopefully this path is a foretaste of what may in future lead all the way to the Liffey at the extremity of the Docks area. For now, however, the path ends abruptly at Bond Road.

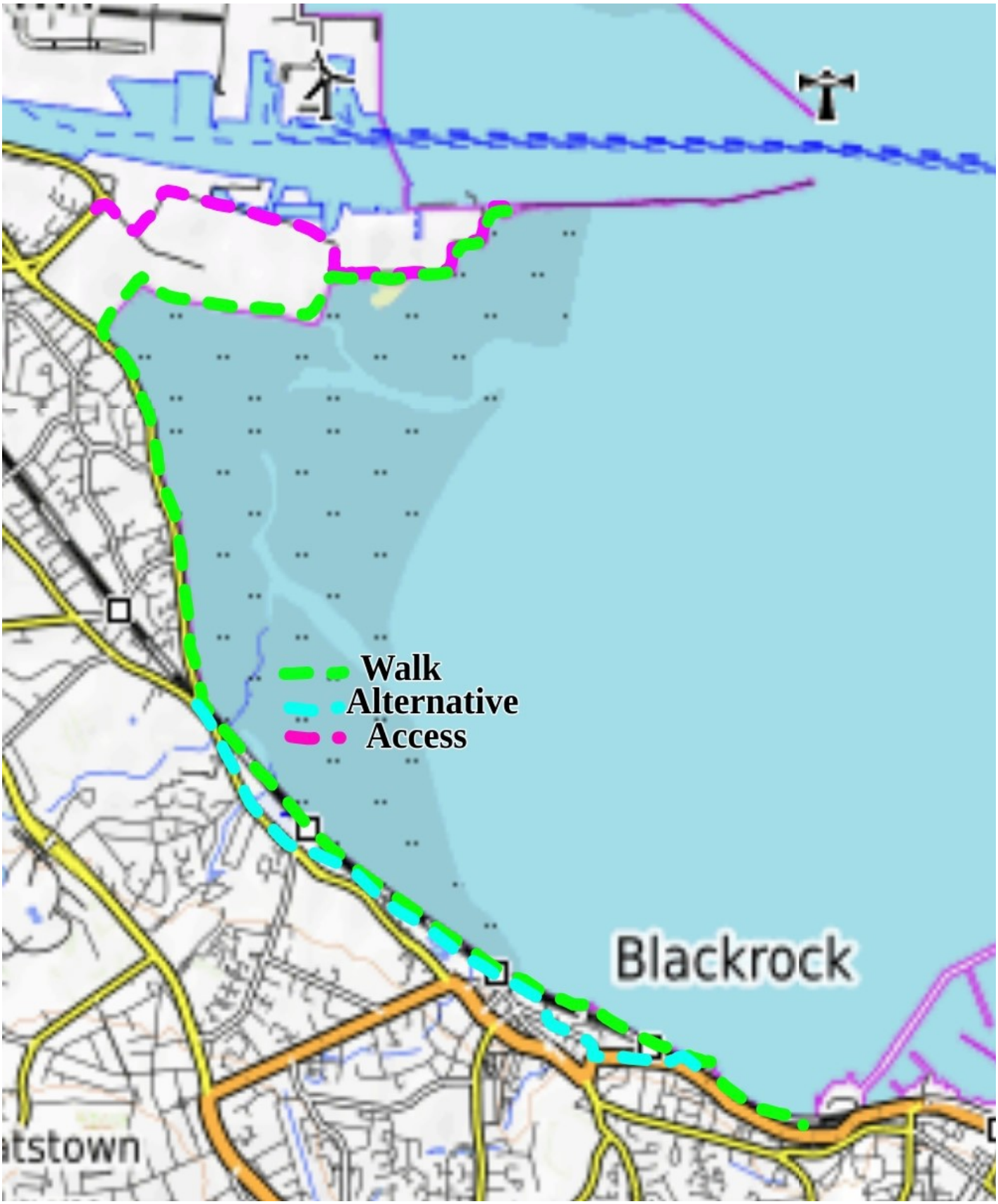
Approaching Alfie Byrne Road junction

Eastpoint path leading to Bond Road

Warning, while you have just been walking on pleasantly peaceful footpaths, away from traffic, you are now actually in the very active industrial Dockland area and very close to where trucks and heavy traffic are joining or leaving the motorway

tunnel. Your most straightforward transport option from here is the Luas terminus at the Point. However, extreme care must be taken when walking on or near the roads mentioned below. (If you want to avoid those busy roads, retrace your steps to the entrance to the East Wall Water Sports facility and continue past that to Alfie Byrne Road where there are bus stops. Alternatively, take the footpath facing the Water Sports facility. Follow this path under Alfie Byrne Road and under the railway, along the bank of the Tolka. Then cross the footbridge over the Tolka and continue to Annesley Bridge Road).

To get to the Luas terminus at the Point, you should walk up Bond Road, very carefully cross Promenade Road and continue straight ahead onto East Wall Road. Cross East Wall road and Sheriff Street Upper to arrive at the Point complex.



Map 10 South Bull Wall to Monkstown & Salthill

Chapter 10

South Bull Wall to Salthill & Monkstown (~9km + 3km)

The walk described here covers a sizeable stretch of the coastline from the port of Dublin to just before the port of Dun Laoghaire. This stretch includes the vast, flat Sandymount Strand as well as some quite mixed sections of coastline bordering the suburbs of Merrion, Blackrock and Seapoint. The full distance can be achieved, mostly on smooth footpaths and otherwise on firm tracks. However, if you want to stay close by the sea, you can enjoy some very easy, level beach walking through the first half of this walk but there are some difficult stretches and significant obstacles, mostly over the second half. The alternative will be to walk on the footpaths of the closest roads to the coastline. There are also several options to split this walk and tackle it in two or more parts. The description below mentions several points at which it would be reasonably convenient to do so.

Access

The start of this walk is at the point where the Great South Bull Wall begins today. The location, known locally as Costello's, is at the furthest point to which you can drive down the Poolbeg peninsula. In spite of being right at the centre of Dublin Bay, this is actually a surprisingly isolated location. It is, sadly, at least 3km from the nearest bus stop, which does not aid the access.

There is car parking available here, so a two-car approach could certainly be worth considering (public transport is generally very good at many other points along the rest of the walk, so there are many options for locating the second car). In view of these difficult access factors, this might be one case where a taxi drop-off at the start of the walk (or to retrieve your car at the end of the walk) might be a reasonable idea.

The Walk

Just before you start walking, take a moment to consider the following points:

Firstly, look beneath your feet at the beautiful construction of this magnificent granite sea wall. The wall that you see today is only about half the length of that originally built. When it was built, the wall ran all the way from Ringsend to the lighthouse, at a time when all the lands of this peninsula, which you have traversed to get here, were non-existent. At that time, the Liffey discharged directly into the bay at Ringsend. The wall was originally constructed using oak piles but, as these started to deteriorate after about a century, they were replaced with the granite wall that survives to this day. (As an interesting curiosity, the granite wall was actually

built working from the lighthouse back towards the city, the granite being floated over on barges from Bullock Harbour in Dalkey). At the time when it was built, this was the longest seawall in the world!

Secondly, look down the remaining section of this wall to the iconic red Poolbeg Lighthouse. That is a wonderful walk on a fine day and one which will reward you with fabulous views from a vantage point right in the centre of the bay – something that few capital cities can boast! Walking the wall will not be described here but it is an experience that should certainly not be missed. The only reservation is to avoid when high tides or stormy seas are expected, as they can break over the wall in a few places.

Thirdly, look north across the mouth of the port to where you should be able to distinguish the North Bull Wall where the walk in Chapter 9 finished. Royal Dublin Golf Clubhouse is particularly recognisable but you may also spot the Star of the Sea memorial statue plus those concrete beach shelters on the North Bull Wall.

Finally, a little to your left and across the Liffey you can see a mound at the end of the Dublin Docks area. That may, at some time in the future, be the terminal point for the walk described in Chapter 9A.

The Great Wall to Poolbeg Lighthouse

Looking North towards Bull Island

Starting from the car park and the valve house here at Costello's, you can either walk along the paved surfaces following the road or, if the tide is out, you can go right down onto the beach and cut the corners of the first two bends in the road. The beach along here is known as the Shelley Banks. If the tide is fully out, you may feel tempted to take a massive short cut from here directly across the beach to Sandymount. However, this is definitely not recommended for a couple of reasons: there are some quite significant channels and even a Cockle Lake which do not empty out at low tide but remain almost imperceptible until you reach them; furthermore, the tide traverses this beach extremely rapidly and, if the tide is incoming, it is very easy to find yourself stranded on a sandbank with water rising all around you.

Industrial installations behind the park

Sandymount Strand from Irishtown Park

You pass the Poolbeg Power Station on your right with its towering chimney stacks, now redundant. A very substantial sewage and water treatment plant for Dublin is immediately ahead of you (depending on the wind direction, your nose may already have alerted you to that). To the left of that plant, a wild park known as Irishtown Park rises as a screen for the industrial installations which are behind the treatment plant. This Park was actually created on top of a massive landfill, following the time when rubbish and construction rubble were simply tipped onto the beach to 'reclaim' the land! You should take a significant track which rises up from the bend in the road into this park which has several pleasant viewing areas with well-placed seats from which you can take in the size and complexities of Sandymount Strand. The quality of the track improves as you go until, at the end of the park, it meets a more substantial tarmac path where you turn left and head towards Sandymount. If you stay on this path, it will bring you to the footpath of Beach Road where you turn left. But, tide permitting, you can in fact now cut across the corner of the beach here and save yourself a few metres. You have now cleared the reclaimed land and you are at last following along the original boundary of Dublin Bay.

You will note that former access openings in the seawall are nowadays all bricked up to prevent flooding of the road in storm conditions. After a few hundred metres, you come to where a section of landfill on the beach side of the seawall has allowed for the creation of several car-parks, recreation areas, exercise trails and a pleasant promenade. The start of this landfill is marked by the white *Cailín Bán* sculpture, renamed *Awaiting the Mariner* but dubbed *The Mexican Wave* by locals because it was a gift by Mexican sculptor, Sebastian. This landfill was created in the 1970s when a major south Dublin drainage scheme was laid across the beach to the treatment facilities at Poolbeg. You can now continue along the Promenade on this landfill or on the beach, as you prefer.

You arrive at Sandymount Martello Tower where there is a public toilet. This tower has been extended and has been variously used over the years as a shop or cafe. Just after the tower you will notice the sad remains of Sandymount Sea

Baths, out on the strand. Those baths were originally linked to Strand Road by a pier to allow access. The baths continued in regular use right up to the 1940s.

Sandymount Martello Tower

The remains of Sandymount Sea Baths

When you reach the end of the landfill, you are approaching the point where Beach Road joins the Merrion Road at Merrion Gates. For a short distance before Merrion Gates, about a dozen private houses are uncharacteristically built on the sea side of Strand Road. Provided the tide is out, you should be able to pass these houses on the seaward side, first crossing a wettish area due to a drain discharging onto the beach. Immediately after this row of houses, there is an opportunity to leave the beach and join the road again at Merrion Gates. From here on, you might decide to follow the footpath of the Merrion/Rock Road but, if you do, you will have the railway and a few buildings between you and the sea. This point will be the last opportunity where you can easily access the road for quite a distance. Further opportunities will mostly involve crossing a railway bridge.

From here, it is worth looking away out across the strand to the point where you started your walk, off to the right of Poolbeg Power Station. You will appreciate just what a sizable sandy bay you have already walked around. If you wish to continue on the coastal side of the railway, you should be warned that you will have to endure a few tricky obstacles between here and your destination. The first of these you encounter almost immediately when you come to the place where the Elm Park stream coming from the golf course discharges onto Merrion Strand. The beach right up to the seawall is quite mucky here and the outflow is quite significant so, unless you have rubber boots, the simplest option is to climb up onto the top of the seawall which separates the railway from the beach and to walk carefully along that wall for a few hundred metres until you see a firm path once again on the grassy area by the beach. (It's worth mentioning that, in the severe flash flooding in June of 1963, many citizens had to use that same wall as their only way of bypassing flooded roads in order to get home). Descend carefully from the wall now and continue along that path towards Booterstown. At the end of this grassy spit, you will be walking on Booterstown Strand and your next obstacle is the discharge of the Trimbleston stream. This, thankfully, is negotiated much more easily. You are now approaching Booterstown Station with its high

bridge and lifts to cross the tracks within the station. You have now completed about 6km and you might consider breaking the trip at this point. Unfortunately, Irish Rail have complicated the access to most of their stations from the sea side. You need to go past the station and take a public footbridge (without lifts) to the station entrance. (If you have opted for using the Rock Road, then you can access the station from the lane and car-park facing the Old Punch Bowl pub.)

From Booterstown, continuing on the sea side, your next obstacle will be the outflow from Williamstown. Once again, this is probably easiest managed by climbing the wall carefully. Do bear in mind that the sloping rocks can be very slippery, especially if wet. Shortly afterwards you come to another public bridge leading across the railway to the Williamstown Martello Tower. This tower looks most unusual because the land around it has been in-filled up to the level of the tower door. Once again, you could break your walk here and access the Rock Road near Blackrock College and Blackrock Clinic.

You are now approaching Blackrock. Blackrock Park extends for most of the distance between here and the town on the landward side of the railway. Towards the end of Blackrock Park, there is another significant outfall where you will either have to wade or climb up the wall to get past. The remains of Blackrock Sea Baths are next and there is a pavement at high-level that allows you to walk along on the railway side of the baths. It is also just about possible to go around the baths on the seaward side at low tide. These baths look pretty insignificant now but, in their day, which continued up to the 1970s, this was probably the only 50m pool in the country. As you pass the baths, Blackrock Railway Station is on your right-hand side. Blackrock is another obvious break point from your walk. In order to access the station, or the town which is also served well with public transport, you should go past the station to where a public footbridge crosses the railway. That footbridge commemorates Eddie Heron, an Irish Olympic diving champion who competed frequently at the baths. (If you have been following the road from Booterstown, you should have turned onto a footpath/cycletrack at Booterstown Playground. That track brings you all the way to Blackrock Station, running parallel to the railway through parkland and pleasantly away from the road.)

To continue from here on the seaward side becomes increasingly difficult and will be near impossible unless the tide is fully out. There are several very significant obstacles over most of the distance between here and Seapoint.

You might prefer, for that reason, to follow the roads, but there will be a significant number of private properties between you and the sea all along this stretch. Take the above footbridge and turn left along Idrone Terrace and left again where it emerges onto Maretimo Villas. Do not be tempted to turn into Maretimo Gardens

West nor East as both are cul-de-sacs. The latter has a footbridge to the sea but that access is locked and reserved for locals. After the road bends right, turn left again onto Seapoint Avenue. Any of the next four left turns (Tobernea Terrace, Ardenza Park, Ardenza Terrace, Lane to Seapoint Station) will allow you an opportunity to glimpse, but not rejoin, the actual coast. Finally, facing Belgrave Road, a narrow lane to the left leads to a public footbridge over the railway and drops down onto the seafront on Brighton Vale which will lead you to Seapoint Martello Tower. Alternatively, you can continue for a further 250m and access the coast without steps at the Tower.

To complete this same section of coastline on the seaward side, having ensured that the tide is fully out, you will need a little determination to get past the obstacles. Continuing on from the footbridge just after Blackrock Baths, you can choose a promising looking path on the railway side of the seawall. However, you soon come to a very significant high railing protecting private property ahead. Pass through the sea wall at this point to the beach side and you will find that there is yet another significant outfall that you have to get around and you will have to cope with perhaps walking on seaweed covered sloping rocks leading up to the seawall. Even at very low tide, it becomes increasingly difficult as you reach a rocky headland jutting out into the sea. Along here, on your right hand side, you are looking up towards private properties which have private access to this section of coastline, including even some small private harbours. Essentially, Lord Cloncurry who owned the Maretimo demesne initially opposed the establishment of the railway along here, but eventually settled for a number of the exotic features enjoyed by this private coastline and by the residents of properties which were later developed on those lands.

The site of Blackrock Baths

Rocky promontory at Maretimo

If you manage to make it around the point, you will come to an area where a grassy slope leads up to a footbridge across the railway. However, this footbridge is locked for private access for the residents of the terrace above. From this footbridge, if you look back along the railway, you will see where the powerful property owner had a massive bridge installed over the railway which allowed his garden to extend, unbroken, down to the coastline. The next section of seawall

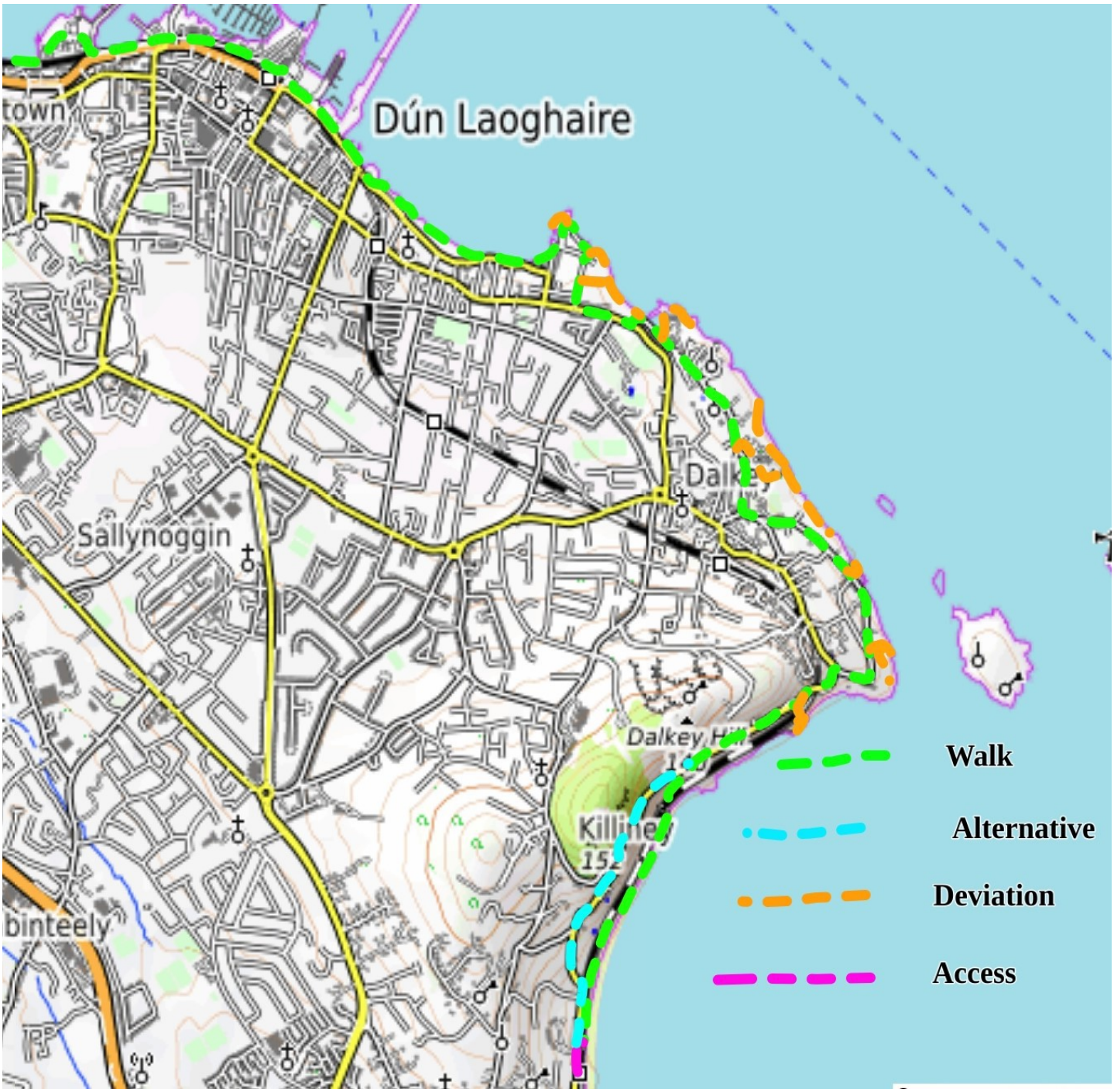
protecting the railway has rounded cap-stones, unsuitable for walking on. However, the sloping surface up to the wall is just about manageable. After some 200m of this sloping seawall, you come to a small bathing shelter and a short ladder with steps leading up to another footbridge which passes over Seapoint Station. However, this bridge also has a locked gate and apparently serves the residents of Ardenza Terrace. Further on, the Irish Rail bridge is within the station itself, but the station at this point appears to be totally inaccessible from the coast.

Continue along the sloping sea wall until a white-painted private residence on the seaward side of the railway forces your route back out onto low rocks. These rocks are submerged when the tide is not out. Rounding this point, the Seapoint Martello Tower thankfully comes into view. The remaining stretch of this difficult coastline has a narrow flattish ledge, somewhat easier to walk on. Caution is still needed because, although flat, the surface is quite slimy and slippery. Eventually, a flight of steps gives access up and over the seawall onto the road at Brighton Vale.

Seapoint Martello Tower and beach

From here you can walk around the Martello Tower, one of the few of these towers that still has a cannon mounted on its roof. This cannon is occasionally fired for ceremonial occasions. Seapoint has always been a very popular bathing spot. There is a pleasant beach here when the tide is out and, when the tide is in, the swimming is very good. Continue from here along a promenade, heading towards Dun Laoghaire. Pass a substantial footbridge on granite piers and with seating facing across the bay towards Howth. Here, a gap in the seawall allows you to access the path on the railway side of the seawall. You arrive at Salthill and Monkstown Railway Station, clearly evident by its bridge and lift system. Once again, Irish Rail have made it somewhat difficult to access the station. You have to go to the public footbridge in order to cross and enter the station on the far side.

This is where we end the walk for today. You have arrived at a point where Dun Laoghaire Harbour is about to extend out into the bay, Dun Laoghaire being the next port along this coast. From here, you can take a DART train back to Sandymount Station and from there an S2 bus will take you to Pine Road, Irishtown, from where you will have a 3km walk back to your car.



Map 11 Monkstown & Salthill to Killiney

Chapter 11

Salthill and Monkstown to Killiney Beach (~9km)

This section of County Dublin's coastline is probably the busiest, most interesting yet most infuriating for anyone wanting to walk the coastline. The latter is because much of the coastline, while accessible at various points and even walkable for several isolated stretches, can only be connected by returning to roads which are somewhat inland from the coastline. Some of these roads are clearly coastal roads which allow regular sight of the sea between properties. However, some of the roads are significantly separated from the sea by multiple private properties to the extent that you may feel that you are not following a coastal route at all.

The walk is presented here as a 9km stretch, which is the distance you will cover if you walk along the route presented without deviating down any of those access points to parts of the shoreline where you would need to return to pick up the route again. However, assuming that anyone interested in exploring the coastline will indeed want to take many of those diversions, the actual distance covered will quite likely end up being significantly more than the 9km quoted above. [In the text below, diversions which involve retracing your steps to complete the route have been presented in brackets like this sentence.] Skipping all the bracketed sections will get you from start to finish of the route.

Because this section is potentially so interesting, it is recommended that you allow plenty of time to explore as much of the coastline as possible. For that reason, you may well want to consider dividing this section into at least two elements, each of which, with the deviations mentioned, would constitute a substantial walk. The most obvious break point would be closest to Dalkey Village with its train station and that is mentioned in the text.

Access

This section begins at the Salthill and Monkstown train station. DART trains are by far the easiest way to access this section. Buses serve stops quite near to that start point (and also the stations at Dun Laoghaire and Dalkey where you might choose to split the route) but, unfortunately, Killiney station is not served by buses. You could also choose to use a two-car solution, in which case park here near the station and at Killiney (or Dalkey).

If you arrive by DART, exit the station and use the public footbridge to your left to cross the railway. This puts you straight onto the coastal footpath where the walk in the previous chapter ended.

The Walk

From the Salthill and Monkstown railway station, there's a path between the railway and the sea-wall, heading towards Dun Laoghaire. Alternatively, a path branching to the left goes slightly closer to the sea as it loops around past a small BMX track, the sewage pumping station, a scrap yard and a building with an impressive mural. Either way, you come, just after a further footbridge over the railway, to the start of the West Pier of Dun Laoghaire harbour. If you wanted to explore this West Pier, this is the point to start from, but for now we'll continue straight on. Here also is Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club, the first of four Yacht Clubs which you will pass as you walk the width of this Harbour.

At the time of the construction of the main harbour piers, the path that you are now walking on was the route of what was known as the 'Metals'. The metals were iron tracks used for the transport from the Dalkey quarries, on horse drawn wagons, of all the stone for the building of both piers. The path becomes a road and you pass by the Coal Harbour which is probably the oldest part of this harbour. After a crossroads, you pass the old complex of Coastguard offices and dwellings on your left, followed by the Irish Lights Head Office which is a spectacular piece of modern architecture, contrasting nicely with the old architecture of the Coastguards House. You are now passing an elaborate array of short piers and marina pontoons accessed via a single entry into the Marina. You then come to the second sailing club, this time The Royal Irish Yacht Club. Next you pass, on the left, what was formerly the HSS car-ferry terminal for the very large catamaran that used to ply between here and Holyhead. That, in turn, is followed by the earlier car-ferry pier with its terminal buildings, currently disused.

View up Marine Road, Dun Laoghaire

RNLI and the National Yacht Club

Dun Laoghaire railway station is now on your right here behind a high wall and, beyond that, the tower of the Town Hall offices. You are now in the heart of Dun Laoghaire and the next Yacht Club, after the roundabout, is the Royal St. George on your left. At the bottom of a short slope you cross where the railway tracks formerly ran out onto Carlisle Pier to meet the original mailboat. Those tracks have only recently been removed and you can still see, on your right, where they

passed under a bridge to join the main rail line. Finally, you come to the fourth of the Dun Laoghaire Yacht Clubs, the National, preceded by the RNLI lifeboat station. The iconic Lexicon library is on the far side of the railway and road on your right hand. You have now arrived at the start of the East Pier which is usually much more popular with walkers than the West Pier.

Both of these piers are well worth exploring as they contain one of the most beautiful and active harbours in the country. They are also very historic having been built due to the horrendous loss of life resulting from shipping unable to find secure east coast havens during storms. Today, the harbour is almost entirely recreational and very little shipping uses Dun Laoghaire as a port – a huge change from the days when most of the sea-bound traffic for Dublin passed through Dun Laoghaire.

Immediately after the pier, Scotsman's Bay extends all the way to Sandycove. The first item here on the seaward side is a recreation area incorporating the site of the former Dun Laoghaire sea baths with the People's Park facing it across the road. The park was developed on the site of a very deep quarry which provided some of the rock for the piers. Prior to that, a Martello Tower once stood on that site. Following on from the baths, a promenade leads all the way around the coast of Scotsman's Bay to Sandycove. At the time of writing, the old Victorian paths between the East Pier and the baths are being renovated. But immediately after that you can see some of the already completed renovations with the prominent statue of Roger Casement with his back to Scotsman's Bay. There is a Happy Out cafe installed in the old baths building and then, just across the road on the right-hand side, is the original Teddy's Ice Cream shop and tea rooms. Teddy's whipped ice cream cones and 99s have been a favourite Dun Laoghaire treat for generations of residents and visitors alike. Teddy's is now available at multiple locations, particularly around Dun Laoghaire, but this was the original spot where you had to go to queue to get a Teddy's ice cream. You can follow the coastline here along the Promenade itself, or a little bit closer to the sea on the lower level.

Roger Casement's statue overlooking the old Baths

Scotsman's Bay looking towards Sandycove

As you approach Sandycove, the Martello Tower becomes obvious on the mound and Sandycove's little sandy harbour is just to the left. Behind the harbour is a headland where an army battery was installed, protecting Scotsman's bay. You pass what's left of Sandycove Baths, now used as a kayaking centre. Then turn left when you join Sandycove Ave.West, leading to the harbour.

It is now impossible to continue to walk fully around this headland at Sandycove because of the large, red-roofed private house that occupies that prime location and which completely blocks the route. So, just follow the pedestrianised road, Sandycove Point, as it heads up towards the Martello Tower. You come then to the Forty Foot bathing area, so called because it was the 40th Foot Regiment which were stationed at the battery here on this point.

[If you pass down onto the rocks at this famous bathing location, you'll find that you can actually follow a semi-paved route, back around most of the headland, so that almost none of the coastline is missed here.]

As you continue along Sandycove Point, you pass the Sandycove Martello Tower on your right. This is the tower where James Joyce lived briefly and which featured prominently in his novel, Ulysses. It is now a Joycean museum. Continue along the road until you meet Sandycove Avenue East.

Forty Foot bathing area and Joyce Martello Tower

Rocky shoreline heading towards Bullock Harbour

You now need to assess how you wish to proceed. There are public toilets immediately to the left and a path leading out onto the rocks.

[You can attempt to continue along the coastline by clambering over those rocks. However, following this rocky route, while getting you to Bullock Harbour, will not allow you to proceed there to any further destination. There are no steps to enable you to climb onto that harbour and direct access onto the harbour wall is blocked by a massive wall to the edge of the pier. You will find that you can't get any further here even at low tide. You will instead have to come back and follow

the roads to bridge this section of the coast.]

To follow the roads, turn right up Sandycove Avenue East until it meets Breffni Road. [Before reaching Breffni Road, if you turn left along Sandycove E. Lane you could have another opportunity for public access onto the rocky stretch of coastline described above, but you would still need to retrace your steps.]

Turn left along Breffni Road, turning left again onto Harbour Road until you come to Bullock Harbour which is dominated by the very big Castle. Standing on the short West Pier, you will have a clearer perspective of just how the rocky coastline route is rendered impassible for walkers. While thinking about that, it is worth reflecting that it was from this vicinity that most of the granite blocks for building the Great South Wall were hewn and then manually transported by barge from this harbour!

Access onto the Bullock Harbour wall is blocked by this wall

Quarry-like area to the east of Bullock Harbour

[To explore the next section of shore-line, go out onto the East Pier of the harbour. Just at the end of the buildings on the right-hand side of this pier, there is a stone wall with a lintelled doorway leading into a quarry-like area. With a bit of agile rock clambering you can proceed here for a few hundred metres on this headland. However, you soon realise that this section of coastline is unfortunately even less possible to complete by walking along the shore-line. You are again forced to return to the roadway at Bullock Harbour.]

View of the impassable rocks to the east of Bullock Harbour

Bartra Martello Tower as seen from Harbour Road

So, from Bullock Harbour, you should continue along Harbour Road past several private developments (including Bailey View, Bartra, Beulah and Rocklands) each of which has their own private access to this section of the coastline. Note that among these properties is the Bartra Martello Tower. After about 500m you come to a cross roads with Leslie Avenue directly ahead.

[There is an opportunity here to again gain access onto the shore-line but not to any through route. Turn left and then immediately right onto Loreto Avenue, passing the National School and Loreto Abbey with its fine grounds stretching openly towards the sea. At the end of the avenue, a very narrow and almost imperceptible lane in the left corner gives public access once more down onto the rocky coastline. Right at the end of the lane, before you emerge onto the rocks, there is a bricked-up entrance to a cave or former tunnel. Be very careful here as the surface is usually wet and slimy for a short distance at the end of the lane.

Finding yourself once again on the rocky shore-line, you have an oportunity to turn left and backtrack, if you wish, to explore some of this section of coastline which you have just bypassed. This section is a broad expanse of large rocks which will involve some clambering. Ultimately, you will be able to backtrack only as far as the boundary wall of Rocklands which extends right out across these rocks and encloses a fjord-like private harbour. At this point you will need to return to the narrow lane that brought you down onto the rocks.

The narrow lane leading from Loreto Avenue down onto the rocky shore

Boundary wall of Rocklands blocking the view back towards Bullock

From the end of the narrow lane, you could alternatively turn right and explore the route towards the next coastal landmark, Coliemore Harbour. But be warned, you will not be able to reach that destination either.

This location also involves some scrambling over rocks along an interesting piece of coastline with some fine private properties above you and with evidence of pool retentions among the rocks, presumably created by their occupants. After about 20 minutes scrambling, you eventually come to a couple of small but impressive private harbours at Cliff Castle and Inniscorrig. That is just about as far as you can realistically proceed even at low tide, so you now need to return again to the narrow access lane that led you down from Loreto Ave. and then retrace your steps to where you left Harbour Road.]

Cliff Castle from its private harbour

Inniscorrig private harbour

You should now proceed along Leslie Avenue. You will again be walking with many private properties between you and the coast. At the end of Leslie Avenue, you have arrived at the optimum point for splitting this walk, if you so wish. You have completed about 5km of the 9km route, excluding any deviations which you may have explored. (If you turn right here, it is a very short walk along Coliemore Road to the centre of Dalkey Village. From there, the DART station is just 200m up Railway Road.)

To continue the route from the end of Leslie Avenue towards Killiney, turn left onto Coliemore Road. After 400m you pass Cliff Castle followed by Inniscorrig on the left (these are the properties whose private harbours you might have reached on the rocky coast below). From here to Coliemore Harbour is just a short downhill walk of a couple of hundred metres. If you walk briefly out onto the West Pier and keep to the left, you will be able to look back along the coast and fully realise why it was too difficult to get any further at shore level.

Coliemore Harbour and Dalkey Sound

Impassible section before Coliemore

Likewise from the East Pier or from the viewing area above it, you can appreciate the difficulty of getting down onto the rocks if you wanted to proceed any further at shore level. It's inaccessible, so it's back to following Coliemore Road which now begins to rise steadily, giving you some idea of how those properties on your left-hand side have an ever-increasing drop to the sea at their back gardens. Before the top of this rise you come to Dillon's Park which once more gives you public access right down to the sea. However, progress along the coast at shore level from here is again too difficult. From the entrance to this park, you have a commanding view of Dalkey Sound between you and the island with its Martello Tower, church ruins and remains of another army battery.

[As you drop down through the park towards the rocks, you will pass an ancient holy well. A few steps beyond that will bring you down to the rocks themselves. If you were very enthusiastic, you could perhaps try working your way back along the coastline here towards the harbour which you have just left, but the rocks are completely covered with seaweed and, even at the lowest tide, that does not look very inviting, especially since you will only have to return the same way.

To the right, there is a substantial wall and a very high rock to discourage you from attempting to proceed any further at this level. Heading back up through the park towards the road, if you keep towards the south side of the park, you will find a small track at mid-level that leads through the growth, heading towards the tip of Sorrento Point. However, just as you get there, you encounter a solid wall with a very high railing fitted to it. This railing drops right down precipitously onto the

lower rocks below. Unless you are prepared for some very serious climbing, you won't be able to make it around that point. (Even if you did, you would eventually encounter cliffs and have to retrace your steps to the entrance to Dillon's Park).]

Extent of privacy protection measures at Sorrento Point

So, continue now to the top of Coliemore Road where it meets Sorrento Road and that iconic terrace of houses which command Sorrento Point. Turn right at the terrace and proceed towards the junction with Vico Road. This terrace enjoys some of the most enviable views along the coastline and down towards Sugarloaf mountains and Bray Head. To appreciate that view, you could deviate briefly into Sorrento Park which rises above the road on the right-hand side. From here you can see the wonderful view of Killiney Bay towards the south. The stretch of shoreline immediately behind those houses is pretty-well inaccessible and private to those who occupy those properties. As you continue on down the road, you will see that there are also more secluded private properties leading down towards that stretch of coast.

Turn left and proceed along the Vico Road with a few more private properties between you and the sea. These houses are somewhat spaced apart, so you can enjoy some views of Killiney Bay. You pass what appears to be a small parking area for two or three cars on your left-hand side, with a railing facing out on the sea side. (Do not be tempted to climb through the small gap beside this railing onto the concrete steps that lead down here – there is a much simpler access to the same path just a little further on). It's worth noting that this space is, in fact, the roof of the portal of the railway tunnel which emerges from the hill at this point.

View enjoyed by residents of the terrace on Sorrento Point

Portal of the railway tunnel emerging just below Vico Road

A few metres further on, you will come to where a path is signposted 'EIRE', directing you down to a footbridge over the railway. This is an opportunity to deviate once again, down to a point on the cliff where there is a popular swimming location.

[From the far side of that footbridge, when you look back, you will get a very clear view of the railway tunnel as it disappears under the houses on the Dalkey hillside. Here you also have an excellent close-up view of the terrace of houses on Sorrento Point with Dalkey Island and its Martello Tower behind. The well-maintained path leads down by several flights of steps to Hawk Cliff swimming area which has been a very popular swimming location for generations of Dubliners. On the way down, you pass a green open space with seating provided, where the recently renovated '7 EIRE' sign is clearly displayed on the cliff face, LOP (Look-out Post) #7. This is one of about 85 such signs that were installed all around the country by coast-guard look-outs to alert WWII pilots to the fact that they were flying over the neutral Irish State.

Aerial view of the LOP#7 EIRE sign

View from Hawkes Cliff bathing area

Unfortunately, this cliff is exactly that so, from that bathing spot it is not possible to make your way along the coast in either direction at shore level. Instead, you need to make your way back up to the Vico Road, turning left when you get there.]

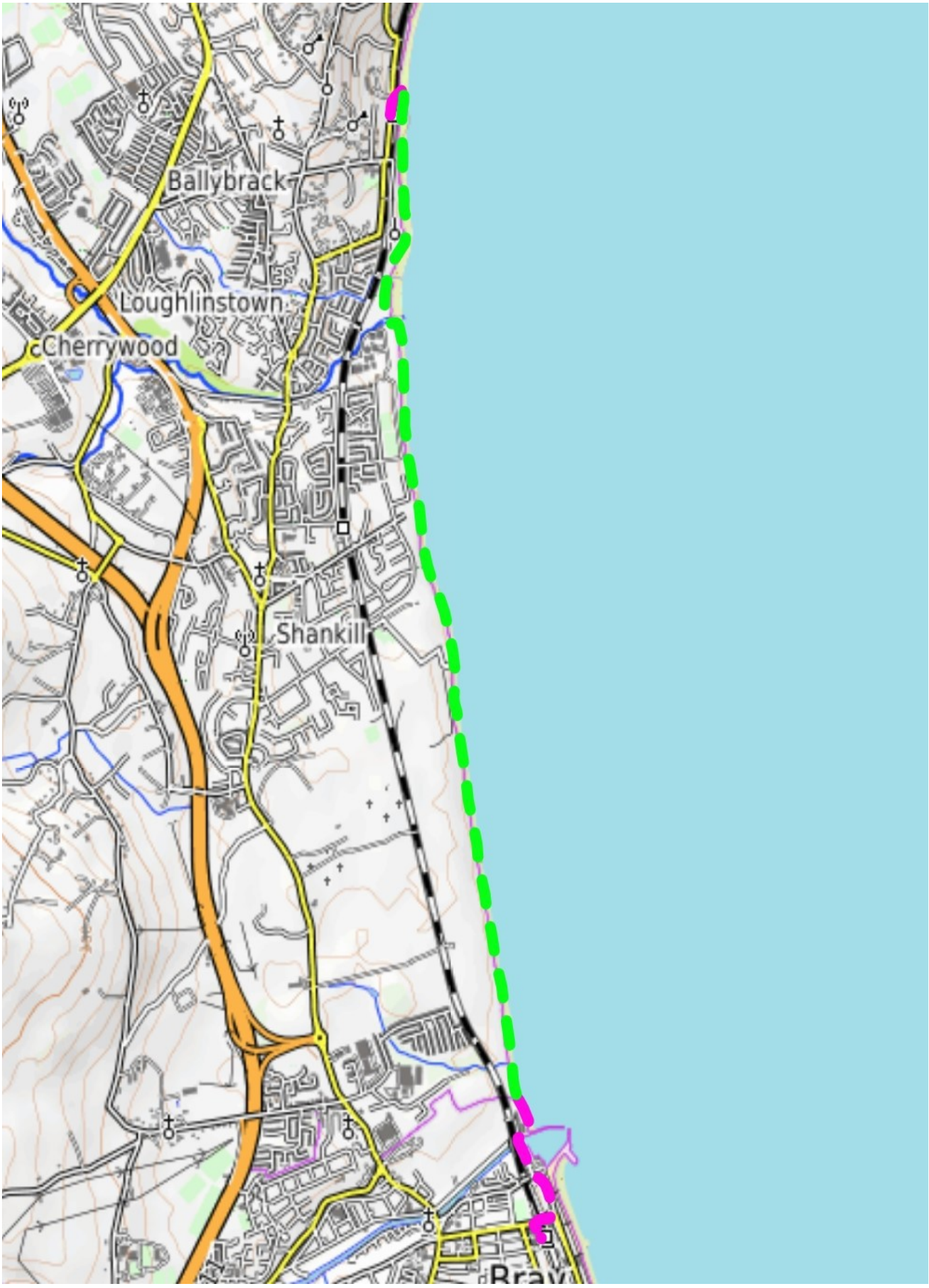
You pass, on the right-hand side of the road, a steep succession of flights of steps known as the Cat's Ladder which leads up onto Dalkey Hill. After about 500m, you come to the next point of access down to the coast (ignore the first small path through a gap in the low wall – it's followed almost immediately by a more substantial path leading down). There are public toilets here and this more substantial path leads down, via another railway footbridge and some quite steep steps to the sandy White Rock beach and bathing area.

(The access is well maintained although possibly difficult for buggies, as would be the beach itself. If following this section with a buggy, you might be best advised to just continue along the Vico Road, turning left onto Strathmore Road which becomes Station Road and brings you to the DART station at Killiney. As you continue along the Vico Road, it's worth mentioning that there are several footpaths on the right-hand side of the road leading up onto Killiney Hill where the views over this coastline are second to none – but that's probably for another day!).

To the left, the beach gives way quickly to rocky cliffs which are impassible. However, just before that and behind a clump of rocks, Decco's Cave is a well known local curiosity. Believed to have been tunneled originally as a lead mine, the cave extends for some hundreds of metres into the rocky hillside. Stories abound in the local folklore about historical and mythical inhabitants of that cave over the centuries. The most recent of those inhabitants was a man known locally as Decco, possibly a former sailor, who slept on a hammock or on an iron bed in the cave and who was ultimately found dead there.

Most of White Rock beach extends to the right of the access steps, in the direction of our route. White Rock beach is separated by White Rock from the much longer stretch of Killiney beach but, at low tide, this strand is continuous. Bray, your final destination for this coastal walk, is now clearly visible in the distance. However, this chapter will terminate at Killiney DART station. You pass a rather sad looking disused refreshment complex. The beach is largely stony and difficult to walk on, so you may prefer to take the grassy track that leads to the small car-park just above the beach. Ignore the access road for this car-park which passes under the railway. Instead, continue until you come to another arched passage under the railway. (This would bring you to the much larger station car-park with public toilets, just off Station Road – perhaps you happen to have a car parked there?) Instead, you can continue just a little further on the sea side of the railway to where a smaller pedestrian route passes under the railway and leads you directly to the station entrance.

From here you can take the DART back.



Map 12 Killiney to Bray

Chapter 12
Killiney to Bray (~6km)

This final section of the County Dublin coastline is a fairly straightforward stretch of stony beach along an area that has seen very significant land erosion over many years. Indeed, the railway line to Bray originally ran along an alignment which has since fallen into the sea in places. In 1915, that original alignment was replaced further inland to save the route from closure due to coastal erosion.

The going underfoot is mostly very consistent and never difficult, but it is a bit tedious due to being largely on pebble beach. As usual, it is recommended to tackle this walk when the tide is out – in this case, you will in that way be more easily able to chose the easiest and firmest part of the beach to walk on. For the final few metres at the Bray end of this walk it is essential that the tide should be out in order to complete the walk without difficulty. Consequently, it is recommended that you start the walk from Killiney about 2 hours before low tide.

For anyone finding such a stretch of walking on pebble beach too tiring, there are options to break and avail of paved surfaces just slightly in from the coast for several kilometres of the walk.

Unlike the erosion of sand dunes mentioned in many of the preceding chapters, the erosion on this section of coastline is on moderately high clay cliffs. Collapse of these cliffs is due to a combination of direct attack by the sea but also by pressure of the inland water-table on the soft cliff face, causing it to collapse. Once collapsed, the clay is quickly washed away by the tide. Walkers should avoid going close to the cliff face because such collapse of the cliff-face can be dramatic and unpredictable, especially after heavy rain.

Access

This section of the coastline is once again running closely parallel to the railway so it is clearly most easily accessed using the DART service to Killiney Station and returning from Bray Station. Alternatively, there is a sizeable carpark just across the road from the station and there is also ample parking near the end of the walk in Bray.

On exiting the DART Station, turn right and then take the steps on the right leading down to a pedestrian tunnel under the railway, giving access to the beach. This is where the walk in Chapter 11 ended.

The Walk

After about 200m you come to steps providing an alternative beach access up to Military Road and Strand Road. About 200m later you pass two pairs of distinctive large castellated semi-detached residences built on the seaward side of the railway. There is another access point from the beach via a lane leading under the railway to Seafield Road right between these buildings. These prominent properties are then followed by an almost unrecognisable residential Martello Tower with a modern glass superstructure.

Castellated residences

Unusual Martello residence

After the Martello, you should move up the beach onto a track in the grass, so as to be in a position to cross the two significant outflows that are just ahead. These are the only outflows that you encounter on this section of the coastline. The first of these outflows is the Kill-o'-the-Grange Stream while the second is the more sizeable Shanganagh River and outflow from the water treatment plant.

(If you prefer to minimise the walking on the stony beach, you could continue here on paved surfaces for about a kilometre to Seafield. However, you will then need to turn inland briefly to Corbawn Avenue before rejoining the beach via Corbawn Lane.

Indeed, instead of returning to the beach at Corbawn Lane, you might chose to continue along Corbawn Drive to where a left-hand path links across to Quinn's Road. This road will lead you past Shankill Tennis Club to a further beach access point at the end of the road, eliminating a total of about 2km of rather tedious stony beach walking.)

Immediately after the second footbridge, you should drop down again to continue your route along the beach to where a marker indicates the former sewage discharge.

Shanganagh River outfall

Location of former sewage discharge

About 1km further along the beach, you encounter concrete ramps, bounded on either side by significant rock boulder defences. These ramps lead up to Corbawn Lane and on to Shankill.

Access ramps to Corbawn Lane

Access ramps and steps to Quinn's Road

After a further 750m, another set of ramps and steps lead up to Quinn's Road where you can see the piers of the original 1850's railway bridge over this road. Up until 1915, the original railway line from Harcourt St. to Bray, and also the line from Dun Laoghaire which subsequently joined it about here, ran much closer to the coastline than does the current alignment. Due to continuous rapid erosion of the coastline along here, those rail-lines were relocated further inland, including the junction of those lines. Since then, some of the original alignments have completely fallen into the sea.

Cliff weathering and erosion

Old sea wall debris on beach

Due to the height of the cliffs, most of the hinterland can not be viewed from the beach along this stretch of coastline. However, shortly after the Quinn's Road access point, Woodbrook Golf Course extends right out to the cliff edge and continues all the way from here to Bray. It was at this point that the original Harcourt St. to Bray railway (1854) ran close to the coast and it was here that the line was joined by the line from Dun Laoghaire. From here on, significant traces of a very substantial sea wall can be seen out on the beach at low tide, running all the way along the beach as far as Bray Harbour. That wall and several groynes were built by the railway company in an initial but futile attempt to prevent the coastal erosion that threatened their railway from its earliest days. Further along here, yet another Martello Tower collapsed into the sea in 1865.

As you approach Bray, significant boulder defences have recently been laid against the cliffs in an effort to protect them. Two concrete ramps lead up through those boulder defences and up onto the higher ground above. At the time of writing, this appears to be Council land under development. As you reach the top of the second of these ramps, you arrive at the county boundary with Co.Wicklow, though there is no notification to that effect. (Unlike at the Delvin, the county boundary is just before, not at, the River Dargle which is just a short few metres further ahead). However, if you have used either of those concrete ramps to gain the higher ground above, then you may now be confronted by a securely locked gate impeding any further progress. It's almost as though Co.Dublin does not want you to leave!

Concrete ramp at the end of Co.Dublin

Beach end and exit onto harbour wall

Return to the beach and continue as far as the Harbour wall where steps lead up onto the wall itself. Please note, that these last few metres of beach can only be traversed dryly at quite low tides. At any other time, expect to get your feet wet or else to have to clamber on the rock defences against the small industrial installation above those rocks. Just before you you climb the steps onto the harbour wall, take a moment to view the short intact section of the railway company's protective seawall where it joins the harbour wall.

River Dargle flowing into Bray Harbour

Bray Harbour with its swans

From the harbour wall, you can now see the full extent of Bray Harbour with the River Dargle discharging into it under the railway and road bridges. The river here is usually well occupied by a sizeable flock of swans.

You are now in Co.Wicklow and you have completed this final section of the coastline of Co. Dublin.

Continue across the bridge and follow the road, passing the Harbour Bar on your right and Martello Terrace on your left, to reach Bray seafront. Yet another Martello Tower, again with a modern glass superstructure, is in residential use on the high ground here on your right. Take the next right turn, Quinnsborough Road, to arrive at Bray railway station. From here you can return by DART to Killiney where this walk commenced.

Bray Martello and Martello Terrace

Almost all of the 150km coastline of County Dublin is both easily accessible and very suitable for walking.
Most of this is level walking, including about 40km of beach.
Hilly sections are found only at Howth and at Dalkey-Killiney.
A few sections of the coastline are extremely popular and well frequented but much of this coastline remains quite unfamiliar to many of those who live so close to this wonderful resource.

Apart from the sheer delight of enjoying this lovely coastline, there is also a great sense of connectivity in linking together the discrete sections of this natural boundary.

Hugh McBryan was born and lives within County Dublin.
A retired engineer, he has always enjoyed walking.
In addition to many walks in Dublin and Wicklow, including the Dublin Mountain Way, he has also walked extensively in the UK, Belgium, Italy and Spain.
Apart from family, his other interests include music and singing.